

LYLE BLACKBURN



LAKE WORTH MONSTER

The True Story of
the Greer Island Goatman

Foreword by Craig Woolheater

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Lyle Blackburn

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For Lyla

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FOREWORD

By Craig Woolheater

I'm a child of the sixties, quite literally. I was born in 1960. As such, I was into dinosaurs, Godzilla movies, the *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, *Eerie* and *Creepy* comics, and *BEYOND* magazine that covered UFOs and all sorts of other strange and spooky subjects. I kept a scrapbook of all kinds of these things, including interesting (to me, at least) esoteric newspaper articles.

The summer of 1969 was especially memorable. Unlike most kids at the time who were all in on the upcoming manned mission to the moon, I was into monsters. The timing couldn't have been better when my grandparents saved the front-page section of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* from July 10th and 11th with articles about a hairy, scary monster that had been seen out at Lake Worth, not far from where we lived.

A month later, I went into a local convenience store in Fort Worth and was lucky enough to find a self-published book by local woman named Sallie Ann Clarke, titled *The Lake Worth Monster of Greer Island, Fort Worth, Texas*. I bought it for the price of \$2.00 and immediately read it from cover to cover. It had all the details about the monster sightings I'd read in the newspaper, and a whole lot more.

My grandparents had a cabin cruiser boat docked at the marina in Eagle Mountain Lake, which is so close to Lake Worth, only a dam separates the two. We spent many summers on the boat back in those days. My vivid childhood imagination had the Lake Worth Monster grabbing the boat and holding on like one of the stories in Sallie Ann's book. I was fascinated with the thought of a monster dwelling so close to my home.

The Lake Worth Monster story inspired my interest in Bigfoot and cryptozoology, things I am still interested in to this day. I've spent many years researching these subjects and organizing events, such as the Texas Bigfoot Conference, so that others with such interests can get together and discuss them.

In 1999, I had the honor of being invited by Sallie Ann Clarke herself to visit her home. While I was there, she pulled out two large suitcases full of articles, letters, drawings, and even photographs—including the original Polaroid of the now-famous Lake Worth Monster photo by Allen Plaster! Soon after, Sallie Ann took me and several friends to Greer Island and showed us where the monster had been sighted back in 1969. It was like coming full circle. The kid who read the book by Sallie

Ann Clarke so many years before was now being escorted by Sallie Ann herself on an outing at Lake Worth!

A decade later, in 2009, I was honored to be asked by the Fort Worth Nature Center and Wildlife Refuge (a department of the City of Fort Worth) to assist with organizing an inaugural Lake Worth Monster Bash, an event that would celebrate the history of the story with presentations, displays, games, and other family type fun. Unfortunately, Sallie Ann's declining health prevented her from participating as the guest of honor, but the event turned out to be a success regardless. The Monster Bash was held again in 2010 and 2011, before moving to an event held every five years. Sallie Ann passed away a month to the day after the inaugural event, but her dedication to the Lake Worth Monster case will never be forgotten.

When Sallie Ann finished writing her book in the early fall of 1969, she probably could not have imagined that there would be more to come; more sightings, photos, and a continuing interest that would make the case known far beyond Texas. It's great that Lyle has now gathered details that have never come to light publicly, and explored the possibilities, to finally tell the monster's complete story and bring it to the present day. This will no doubt fully preserve the history and cement the monster's legacy in the annals of time.

As I write this, I'm also helping to organize the 2024 Lake Worth Monster Bash, which will celebrate the 55th anniversary of the sightings. It seems as though the monster who grabbed my imagination way back then will always be reaching for the imaginations of a new generation. Long live the Lake Worth Monster!

Craig Woolheater
July 10, 2024

Introduction

If you do a Google search for “Lake Worth Monster,” you’ll get nearly twenty-four million results. That’s not bad for an alleged monster whose story originated in a quaint corner of North Texas in 1969. They say “everything’s bigger in Texas” and this is certainly one of those instances where a few small news reports resulted in an enduring Lone Star legend that still grabs attention today. Over the years, the Lake Worth Monster’s story has been covered in books, featured on television shows, included in Texas Parks and Wildlife productions, incorporated into theater plays, and even spawned its own festival called the Lake Worth Monster Bash. It is really quite extraordinary, and it’s special to me since I am also a Texan.

I was born in the cowboy town of Fort Worth, Texas, and raised in Euless, a nearby start-up suburb only twenty-three miles east of Lake Worth. As a guy who has always been fascinated by monsters and cryptids (or should I say, *obsessed with*), the Lake Worth Monster definitely qualifies as my “hometown monster,” so to speak. Yet I did not know anything about the story until long after its seminal heyday in ’69. That’s because I was too young at the time. The story, which spawned front-page headlines in our local *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* newspaper that summer, was a hot topic around town for a while, but soon faded into a new decade overshadowed with burgeoning political conflicts, blockbuster movies, and advancing technology. Since no one mentioned the monster news to me—or maybe they did and I don’t remember—it wasn’t until I eventually got my hands on a copy of Elwood D. Baumann’s 1978 book, *Monsters of North America*, that I had an inkling a big-time bugger might be living in our local backwoods!

Even though I was too busy rocking diapers and a kid-size cowboy hat to be concerned with reading the newspaper or watching TV news, plenty of people in our area did hear about the creature that summer. It would have been hard to avoid it. Not only was the case publicized for weeks in the heavily circulated *Star-Telegram*, but it was covered in a news segment that aired across the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex by way of WBAP-TV news. And if that didn’t grab ya, you might have been lucky enough to stumble across a copy of the authoritative book on the subject by Sallie Ann Clarke, titled *The Lake Worth Monster of Greer Island, Fort*

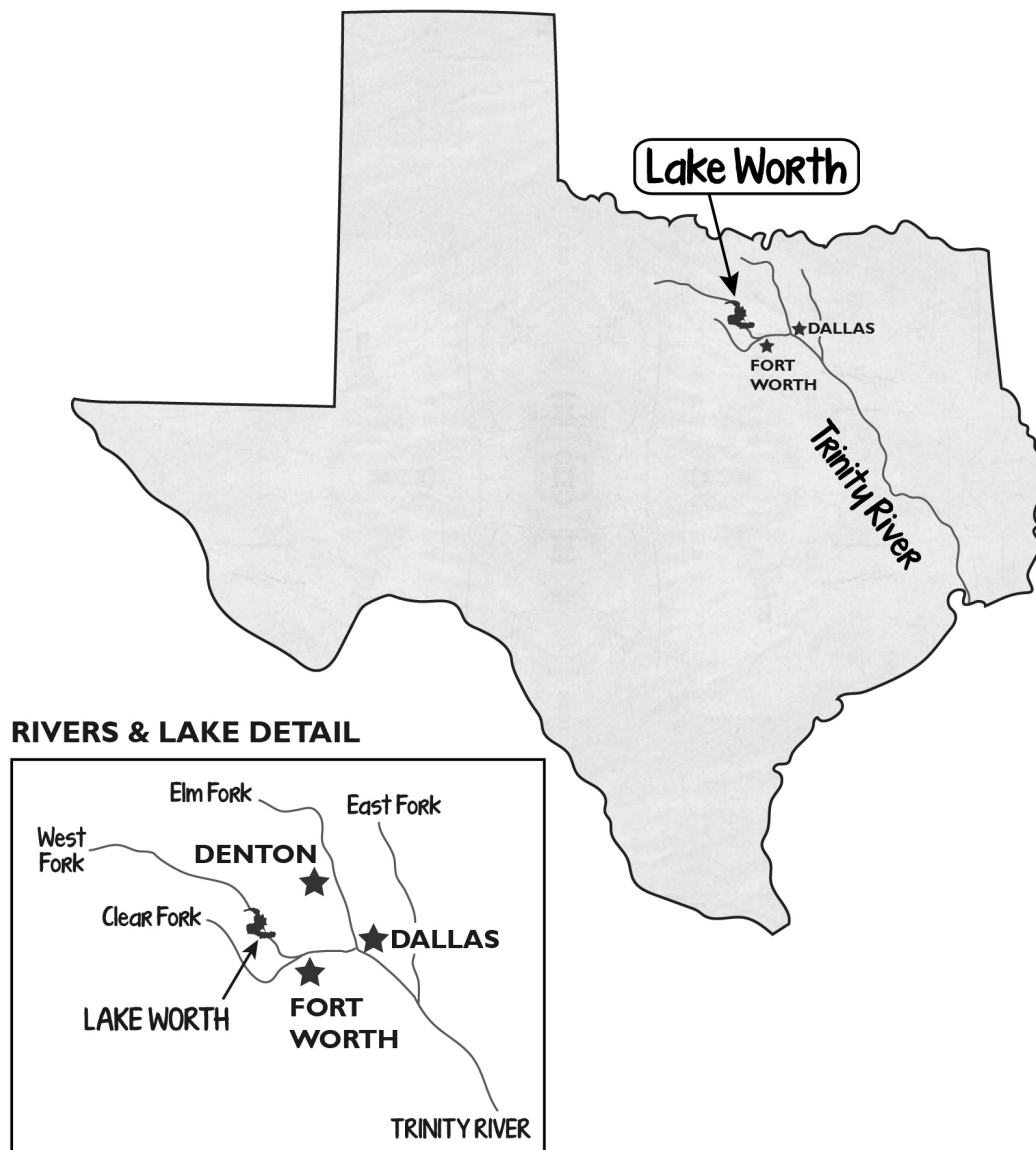
Worth, Texas. The book, which was self-published by Clarke in the fall of 1969, was circulated locally in small quantities, but it was enough to help spread the word and bring more attention to the case.

Not surprisingly, the story faded from local news coverage as they moved on to other topics that concerned the world. Monster stories like these usually hit the papers hot and then disappear as quick as a creature into the woods when no one actually captures the alleged beast or apprehends a teenage prankster. However, that did not stop the story from slowly growing to epic proportions in the years that followed, well beyond anyone's expectations. And surely, no one at the time could have expected such a result. The tale of the Lake Worth Monster isn't the biggest mystery in the Lone Star State—we also have UFOs, haunted hotels, and Marfa Lights—yet it has held steady ground, passing down through generations and occasionally reliving its gruesome glory in *Star-Telegram* retrospectives and inspiring new posts on the World Wide Web. It has even been covered on television shows such as *Monsters and Mysteries in America* featuring yours truly.

Like a real-life *Scooby Doo* adventure or *X-Files* episode, the Lake Worth Monster case has all the ingredients of a tantalizing mystery: eyewitness sightings by the locals, a history of spooky legends, police investigations, nighttime hunts, and rumors of a grand hoax. If you've read any of my prior books, you know that's a combination I cannot resist, especially when Lake Worth is only a short car ride away from where I still reside in Texas. So join me, once again, as I set out to explore the facts, the fears, and the wild possibilities of a creepy case that might just have us all believing in monsters by sundown.



The author at Lake Worth's Greer Island (photo by April Rose)



Texas map with Trinity River and Lake Worth locations

CHAPTER 1.

A TERRIFYING NIGHT



John Reichart sat quietly gazing at the moonlight's ripple on the dark lake. The cork of his fishing line gently bobbed on the water as he held the rod steady. So far he hadn't had any luck, but it didn't really matter. The night was warm and peaceful, and he was happy to be away from a hectic week of work in the city.

John's wife, Linda, did not feel comfortable sitting outside in the dark, so she was relaxing in their car reading a book. It was late Thursday night and they had come to Greer Island on the shores of scenic Lake Worth ten miles from the city of Fort Worth, Texas. The area was something of a popular hangout where couples could find privacy, or guys could fish the lake and drink a few beers. It wasn't far from the legendary cowboy town, but with the thickly wooded surroundings and miles of fresh water, it was definitely a world away.

John nudged the fishing rod, hoping to entice a fish. He had threaded a fat nightcrawler onto the hook, which usually worked well. He had heard the fishing was great at Greer Island, but tonight seemed off with

nothing having tugged on the bait after fifteen minutes. Perhaps there had been too many fishermen out there lately, depleting the supply, or something was scaring off the fish. He couldn't see anything below the surface of the dark water, so he could only speculate.

Linda could barely see her husband down on the shore from where she sat in the car. She would have been more apprehensive, but there were two other cars with couples inside parked nearby. Even though they were inside their cars talking and listening to the radio, at least there were other people there. The lake was probably beautiful by day, but at night, the isolation among the hovering trees and moon shadows gave her an eerie feeling. She thought she could hear the sound of animals walking in the brush but could not see anything. Perhaps it was her imagination.

John finally caught a huge channel catfish, giving him hope that the fishing was indeed good. He had just pulled the hook from its mouth and placed the fish on a stringer when a scream shattered the stillness. It had come from his wife! John spun around and looked toward the car. He was shocked to see something moving around on top.

John threw aside the fishing rod and started running up the bank toward the car. Linda was screaming and he could hear commotion coming from the two other cars parked nearby. By now the thing—whatever it was—had moved from the roof of the car and was now standing at the passenger-side window where Linda was sitting.

The closer John got to the car, the more he panicked. The thing appeared to be standing upright on two legs like a person yet looked like it could be some kind of animal or beast. It was covered in wild, white hair with what looked like horns or some kind of protrusions on its head. Some parts of it glimmered like scales of a fish.

When he reached the car, he nearly tackled the thing without thinking. It did not fall to the ground, but the shove sent it stumbling away from the vehicle. For a moment, John was essentially face to face with it. The thing was a frightening mix of human and animal features, covered in what looked like “fur and scales.” He would later describe it as a “half-man, half-goat,” which was the only way to explain the bizarre beast.^[1]

John scrambled to the other side of the car and jumped into the driver's seat. He started the ignition as his wife continued to scream. The goat-thing must have regained its footing and lunged for the car. Its clawed hand scraped along passenger-side door with a terrible sound.

John hit the gas pedal and started down road with a blast of dust and gravel. The thing tried to jump on the back of the car, scratching and grasping for a hold with its hands. John heaved the wheel of the vehicle back and forth. The jerking motion caused the thing to lose its grip, sending it careening to the road where it landed in the dirt. John was not sure if it got up or laid there as he sped off down the dark road through the trees. Neither he nor Linda dared to look back. The experience was the most intense minute of their lives.

John raced to Chenaults Café located at the intersection of Roberts Cut Off Road and Jacksboro Highway. It was the nearest establishment he knew of. He slammed the car into park and both he and Linda ran inside, panicked, yet relieved to be away from the lake. He asked the waitress if he could borrow the phone to call the police. She nodded, pointing to a rotary dial-phone near the cash register. John picked it up and dialed 0. In a stuttering voice, he asked to speak to the police.

My late friend Bill Morris was inside the café that night. He was a Fort Worth resident who frequently visited Lake Worth to hang out with friends or do some fishing. He didn't know what had happened to the couple, but he could tell it must have been bad. The woman was shaking, taking in deep breaths as she sobbed and shuddered. The man looked sweaty and disheveled.

After John hung up the phone, he sat at a table with his wife to wait for the police. The waitress spoke to them for a moment and brought them two glasses of water. The couple sat drinking the water and talking in hushed tones between themselves; the woman continued to sob between words. The patrons in the café, including Bill Morris, watched intensely not knowing what to do.

A short time later, patrolman James McGee of the Fort Worth Police Department entered the restaurant and asked for Mr. Reichart. John and Linda got up and followed the officer outside. Three more patrol cars pulled into the lot as John was explaining to McGee what had happened. Linda said she first saw the creature—or whatever it was—when it “dropped from a tree to the top of the car.”^[2] It then moved to the passenger-side door and tried to reach in and grab her. She slid to the other side of car, barely avoiding its claws as she let out a scream.

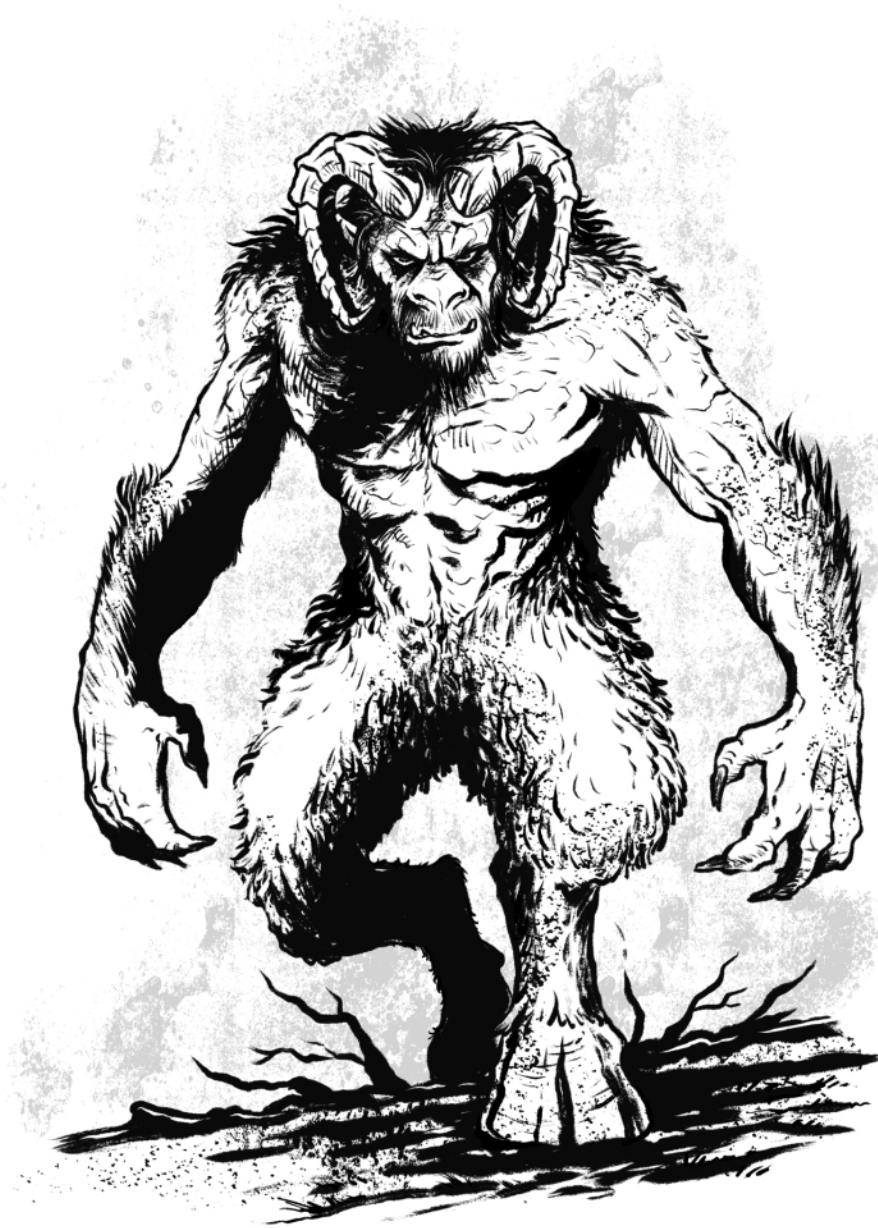
The officer seemed to find the story dubious, but John assured him that he nor his wife had been drinking and that everything they told him

truly happened. John took the officers to his car and pointed to a long scratch down the side that he said had been made by the thing's claw-like hands. McGee examined the scratch, feeling that there could be some truth to the wild tale.

Two more cars pulled into the café parking lot. It was the other couples who had been at Greer Island during the attack. They corroborated the story, telling officers they had also seen the thing before it ran into the woods and disappeared. They too were completely shocked.

John and his wife agreed to accompany the officers back to Greer Island so they could point out just where the attack had occurred. The four police units followed him down North Shore Drive, where they searched in vain for the alleged beast. They were not really surprised. The woods around Greer Island were dark and dense where anything—be it human or animal—could easily hide.

The story the six witnesses told police was extremely bizarre, and the reality of a “half-man, half-goat” seemed totally far-fetched, yet the officers could not completely dismiss the incidents outright. This wasn't the first time they had received reports about some kind of monstrous thing lurking around the lake. And it would definitely not be the last.



Depiction of the creature seen by John Reichart

(Based on a lost drawing by John Reichart)

Art by Jonathan Dodd with direction from John's son, Aric Reichart

CHAPTER 2.

HORRIFYING HEADLINES



On Friday, July 10, 1969, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* newspaper splashed the story across the front page with the bizarre headline: “Fishy Man-Goat Terrifies Couples Parked at Lake Worth.” The article, written by journalist Jim Marrs,^[1] shared the details of the frightening incident at Greer Island, stating that: “Six terrified residents told police early today they were attacked by a thing they described as being half-man, half-goat and covered with fur and scales.”^[3] John Reichart was mentioned by name, but his wife and the other witnesses were not.

Marrs had obtained the information from patrolman James S. McGee who went on record saying: “We did make a serious investigation because these people were scared.” However, McGee believed the couples had been the victims of a prankster, not a monster. He suggested that someone either threw a “dummy” on the car or someone was dressed in an

“ape costume,” noting that it would have been a very dangerous kind of prank since it could have resulted in the “prankster” being shot.

A police dispatcher told Marrs that the department had been receiving calls about some kind of strange thing lurking around Lake Worth for about two months, but so far they had dismissed the reports as nonsense. Now they weren’t sure what to think since they had six sober people claiming to have seen something they believed was a monster.

The news article may have leaned toward the possibility of a prank, but John Reichart did not believe that. During my research into the case over the years, I have spoken to a number of people who were either there at the time or had firsthand knowledge of details that were never shared publicly. Unfortunately, I never spoke to John Reichart myself (he passed away in 2003), but I have spoken to his son, Aric Reichart, at length. Aric remembers the story well, having heard it many times as he was growing up. He assures me that his father believed it was some sort of beast he fought with that night rather than someone dressed in a costume. John wasn’t sure exactly what kind of beast, but it was definitely something covered in hair with the ability to stand upright like a human. It had characteristics, such as horns, that made him think it was some kind of “goatman.” Aric said his father didn’t like to speak of the incident very often, since people tended to laugh at him, but nonetheless he never changed his story. Aric vividly recalls a drawing that his father made of the thing. The drawing has since been lost, but Aric worked with artist Jonathan Dodd to recreate it from memory. The depiction of the alleged monster, with its goat-like body and massive horns, is striking to say the least.

Greer Island, where the attack took place, is located on the north end of Lake Worth where the west fork of the Trinity River flows into the larger body of water. The lake was created between 1911 and 1914 by damming up sections of the river. Precipitation in Texas can be unpredictable, so in order to sustain a steady supply water for residents, hundreds of reservoirs such as this have been created artificially. Once established, these bodies of water can also be used for recreation, and Lake Worth has certainly been popular in that regard.

Back in 1969, there were various paved and unpaved roads that provided access to the Lake Worth marina, swimming areas, and parks. The main hangout for nighttime visitors, however, was at the end of North Shore Drive (now known as Shoreline Road) where it dead-ends at Greer Island.

This area, which was part of the Greer Island Refuge and Nature Center at the time, was surrounded by considerable woods, making it a perfect place for couples to find seclusion and perhaps to conceal a strange entity.

Even though police wrote off the incident as some sort of prank, that did not stop the public from becoming completely enthralled after reading the monstrous details in the *Star-Telegram*. The article, along with a radio news broadcast, created such an immediate stir that people began to flock to Greer Island the next day, hoping to see something for themselves.

By the evening of Friday, July 10 (literally the same day as the Reicharts' early morning attack), there were as many as two hundred people gathered near a landmark across from Greer Island known as "The Pit."^[4] The area consists of a high, rocky ridge that overlooks a wide clearing covered in grass and surrounded by thick trees.^[5] Members of the crowd—which reportedly included an officer from the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department—were sitting on their cars talking when several of them noticed an upright figure run across the adjacent road and disappear into the trees below the ridge. Moments later, an animal-like scream rang out as the figure emerged on top of the cliff. Everyone turned to look as it began running back and forth along the rocky rim. The figure was on two legs and appeared to be white or gray in color.

Several people started running toward the ridge causing the whatever it was to run up into the woods. Moments later, it reemerged holding a rubber tire with the wheel rim still attached. It rushed toward the group of people and hurled the heavy tire above the heads of the shocked onlookers. Witnesses estimated the tire traveled up to five hundred feet before it skidded to rest in the grassy part of the clearing. Everyone agreed that the tire appeared to have been *hurled*, not rolled, a feat that would have been difficult for your average prankster.^[6]

People began screaming while most of them immediately fled on foot or jumped into their cars and drove off. During the chaos, a young man named Ronnie Armstrong backed his car into a tree as he hurried to get away. A few bold onlookers drew their guns and were ready to fire, but the figure quickly disappeared into the thick trees atop the ridge. What was left of the crowd hung around for a while, some even searching for the "monster" along with the police officer, but the thing never reemerged from the woods. Fortunately, no one was hurt during the commotion, which was a very real possibility given the firearms and panicked crowd.

The following day, July 11, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* ran a follow-up article that recounted the details of the new sighting. Those who had seen the figure on the cliff described it as being large with gray or white hair on its body much like a goat or perhaps a light-colored ape. Some of the witnesses believed they also saw horns. A man by the name of Jack Harris told reporters “the creature walked like a man but didn’t look like one. He looked like he was seven feet tall and must have weighed about three hundred pounds.” Harris went on to say: “We were driving around trying to find it, when we heard it squalling. We heard it before we saw it.” He described the squall as something like a “pitiful cry” that did not sound human.^[7]

It was dark outside, but either way numerous people got a pretty good look at the figure as it ran along the ridge and threw the tire. Though they couldn’t say just what it was, they did not believe it was a person dressed in a costume. Clydell McPeak was one of the onlookers there that night and was actually on top of the ridge when the thing threw the tire. McPeak reached out to me after I appeared on the “Lake Worth Monster” episode of the television show *Monsters and Mysteries in America*. In an interview, McPeak told me he didn’t actually see the thing throw the tire, but a short time later he did see it walking off into the woods. He said it was big and did not appear to be a human. He was with friends that night, some of whom also saw it.

The wild events at Greer Island were enough to prompt WFAA-TV Channel 8 to cover the story.^[ii] In a two-minute feature, news anchor Jerry Taff interviewed two witnesses. One of these was Jack Harris. He told Taff: “It was about seven foot tall, weighed about three hundred fifty pounds, and it was hairy, and I couldn’t see his face.”^[8]

Taff also spoke to Ronnie Armstrong, who had witnessed the tire-throwing incident. “It was up there on those cliffs, and it stayed up there running back and forth,” Armstrong explained in a youthful Texas accent. “It wouldn’t run the whole distance around, it just ran halfway around and halfway back. And it wouldn’t run through the trail that was up there, it’d run through the edge of the cliff that was pretty rugged and had a lot of weeds and trees around it. I couldn’t see how a human could really get through there as fast as it could.”^[9]

Another witness, simply referred to as “a motorist,” told a reporter from the NBC network affiliate WBAP-TV that he “tried taking a flash-

bulb picture of the strange being” when he saw it standing in some brush about fifty feet away. The Fort Worth Crime Lab took the camera and developed the roll of film within hours, hoping to get a clear image of the culprit. Unfortunately, the film only produced two photos: “a blank negative” and a shot of two men in a Volkswagen.^[10]

As the story gained more press, various public officials began to weigh in with theories to explain away the so-called monster. In a *Star-Telegram* article dated July 14, Helmuth Naumer of the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History stated that he believed the monster was actually a bobcat. Richard Pratt, the naturalist in charge of the Greer Island Refuge and Nature Center at the time (now known as the Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge), confirmed that someone had turned a pet bobcat loose in the park. Naumer said the cat was fairly large and had jumped from trees onto the hoods of cars a few times, but that it was not aggressive or dangerous.^[11] Another theory was offered by a local kennel owner who said he was “tracking a 40-pound runaway macaque monkey near the lake.”^[12]

A bobcat and a monkey may well have been roaming the woods around Lake Worth, but these animals did not seem like a good candidate for the monster as a whole. While a bobcat may account for the squalling “pitiful cry,” it seems unlikely that it could have been mistaken for a larger, bipedal creature. A sighting of a monkey might have been strange, and perhaps frightening to some, but this too doesn’t align with witness descriptions.

A person in a costume seems like a more reasonable explanation, yet how could an amateur prankster create a costume in 1969 that would be good enough to fool John Reichart and his wife who saw it at a distance of a few feet? And if the heavy tire and rim were actually hurled over the heads of numerous witnesses, how could that have been accomplished by a person? It was a compelling mystery that would only deepen.



Lake Worth with Greer Island in the distance
(photo by the author)



“The Thing” throwing a tire
(art by Jonathan Dodd)

CHAPTER 3.

MONSTER MAYHEM



The frenzy surrounding the case of what newspapers were now referring to as “The Thing” continued to draw people to Greer Island, literally by the hundreds. Authorities were doubtful that The Thing was actually an unknown creature, but either way they had a problem on their hands because some of the sightseers were armed and ready to take a shot if it showed itself. Tarrant County Sheriff Lon Evans responded to reporters with his own opinion: “There may be a prankster going around out there dressed up like some kind of monster. If he is, it’s a good way to get shot. There’s also the possibility that some people have hypnotized themselves and are convinced they saw some kind of apparition although they didn’t actually do so.”^[13]

If it were an apparition, it seemed to be doing a good job of “hypnotizing” people because the sightings did not stop. In the weeks that followed, there were more incidents that involved the alleged monster. On

one occasion it was reportedly seen running across an open grass field. In another, five people claimed they saw it breaking the limbs of a huge oak tree. Others said they heard the thing scream with an eerie wail at night. ^[14]

Ronnie Armstrong, who was present when the thing threw the tire from the ridge, claimed the creature had later been wounded by a gunshot. He said he found a pool of its blood near a picnic table. A trail of blood led from the spot down to the water's edge, where the thing presumably swam over to Greer Island to escape. Armstrong also observed some large and usual tracks found by a group of people while they were exploring the banks of the lake. The tracks measured sixteen inches long with a toe spread of eight inches. They appeared to have been made by something that was very heavy. Based on the sightings and tracks, Armstrong felt it might be "a big white ape of some kind." ^[15]

Many of these later incidents were either ignored or unknown to the press because they were never covered. But luckily, a Fort Worth area resident and would-be writer by the name of Sallie Ann Clarke saw the value of following up on the story. The day after the incidents made headlines, she headed to Lake Worth with a camera and a cassette tape recorder and began interviewing witnesses and documenting the events. She then wasted no time in writing up the story and self-publishing a book called *The Lake Worth Monster of Greer Island, Fort Worth, Texas* in the fall of 1969. The book includes information that would have otherwise been lost or forgotten.

One of the people who told Clarke about an encounter was Vic Franklin of Fort Worth. Franklin told her he had seen the monster several times. He described it as being at least seven feet tall and looking like a "real hairy human." On one occasion Franklin heard a loud roar that sounded like a "lion or bear," which he assumed came from the creature. ^[16]

Another eyewitness, Jim Stephens of nearby Blue Mound, Texas, told Clarke the thing jumped on the hood of his car one night as he and two other men were driving around the lake. They had heard about the creature while fishing that day and decided to look for it themselves. Stephens said the creature remained on the hood until he swerved and ran into a tree. At that point, the thing jumped off and ran into the woods. According to Stephens:

It was real big and human-like with burnt scars all over its face, arms and chest. I am six feet four and the thing is

a lot taller than I am; it's at least seven feet, perhaps taller. The only people that don't believe are the ones that haven't seen it. You know, you either see something or you don't. I SAW IT!^[17]

Like Clarke, other locals became deeply interested in the mystery and spent considerable time trying to get a glimpse of the alleged creature or at least find some solid evidence. James Bramlett and his wife, along with Linda Gilliam, claimed they had been successfully tracking the thing for a week. Though they hadn't laid eyes on it, they heard strange vocalizations and found suspected footprint tracks. The tracks, which they described as simply being "large," were found in and around those of a bobcat as if the two creatures were hanging around together. The association between the tracks is unclear, but at least the two distinct types of tracks reinforced the notion that the bobcat and the Lake Worth Monster were not one and the same. Plenty of people confirmed they heard the cries of a wild cat around Lake Worth, but most seemed certain the cat sounds were not the same as the wail of the so-called creature.

Aside from eerie sounds and strange footprints, a few people reported finding dead animals around the lake that appeared to have been the victims of a powerful animal. The Bramletts said they ran across some dead sheep while hiking through the woods.

"They had their necks and heads crushed," the family explained to Clarke. "Their chins were laying in the middle of their backs [and it] looked like something had just ripped them apart."^[18] No one could say if the monster did this, but it definitely fueled speculation since a bobcat or a macaque monkey could not have killed a sheep in this manner.

An associate of the Bramletts, who also resided in Fort Worth but was not identified by name, said he and more than a dozen other guys were wading out in the lake one night when they saw "him" on a small peninsula of land. They focused their flashlights on the thing as it moved. The young man told Clarke it looked like "a big hairy object, kinda like bear." It looked to be gray or a light, sandy brown in color, though he couldn't be sure because of the hazy flashlight beam. The guys made their way to the land and followed it through the woods for a distance, but eventually gave up because the undergrowth was just too thick.^[19]

Clarke's book—which has become a significant collector's item—has played an important role in the Lake Worth Monster legacy over the

years since her diligent investigation and subsequent writing documented some crucial witness testimony and older stories that were never covered in the newspaper. The book also contains a good number of photos that provide a snapshot of the people and the landscape of Lake Worth at the time and portray the sense of seriousness in which the amateur monster hunters undertook their investigations. The only downside is that the work is a semi-fictional treatment of the subject that includes both facts and fanciful passages in which Clarke imagines what it would be like to see the creature for herself. Since she had not seen the thing prior to writing the book, she saw no harm in filling out the story with these entertaining and imaginative sections. In most cases, it's apparent which passages are imagined and which are journalistic, but the approach does tend to muddy the waters in terms of accurate details. Clarke's intention at the time was to document the events while at the same time write an entertaining book, and to this end she does a fantastic job. To her credit, she does make it clear on the first page that the book is a work of "semi fiction," though the pictures and testimony are from real people who claimed to have seen the monster.

The book is truly an academic achievement considering Sallie Ann published it independently without the advantage of a publisher. Not to mention the speed in which she managed to get it done. After interviewing nearly a hundred people, she wrote the book in three days. According to Bobby Brooks, a young man who befriended Clarke during her research, he sat in her living room as Clarke played back the recorded tape interviews while typing up the stories. Once she had a draft of the book, Clarke hired a woman to proofread it and retype it into the final manuscript.

For the cover art, Clarke enlisted the help of Brooks, who had experience in drawing. Brooks told me he drew three different depictions of the monster and let Clarke choose the one she liked best. Clarke then took the cover art and manuscript to a local woman who produced cookbooks to have it printed. The whole thing was done in a week! By October, Sallie Ann was selling books at local bookstores and shops and holding book signings in the area, including a signing event at The Pit across from Greer Island on October 11 and 12. ^[iii]

In the end, Clarke's diligent work managed to capitalize on the fresh frenzy surrounding the case, but it was perhaps a bit too hasty considering there was more to come. Barely a month after Clarke's book hit the hands

of readers, one of the most dramatic incidents in the Lake Worth Monster case would take place.



*Composite of the Lake Worth Monster based on descriptions of the more ape-like entity
Art by Jonathan Dodd*

CHAPTER 4.

CAUGHT ON FILM



The trees along North Shore Drive hung over the road like a canopy. It was like a dark, twisted tunnel leading to a spot where mother nature might hide her most precious secrets. The route, especially at night, was made all the more spooky by the ongoing reports of a hairy, howling beast said to lurk at its terminus.

The headlights of Allen Plaster's car illuminated the overhanging flora as he and two friends drove at a leisurely pace along the road at 1:30 a.m. They had been coming to Greer Island several times a week to see if they could get a glimpse of the monster whose story they had been following in the news. So far they hadn't had any luck, but that would change in an instant.

"Look! Look! There it is!" Allen's friend Kay shouted from the passenger seat as she pointed to a spot near the woods on his side of the road. Allen hit the brakes as he focused on a white-colored figure standing

in an area of three-foot-tall grass. The young man grabbed the Polaroid camera sitting in the seat next to him and quickly raised it to his eye. The thing started to run but not before Allen could snap a photo. The next instant, the thing was gone, leaving the three motorists stunned but not empty-handed. Allen had managed to capture the thing dead center in the frame of film.

The date was November 19, just over four months since the monster frenzy had started at Lake Worth. Plaster, who was only twenty-two years old at the time, was already a successful business owner, having established some women's wear boutiques in Fort Worth called House of Allen. His passengers, a couple by the name of Gary and Kay, were also from the Fort Worth area. What they saw that night, captured by Allen with his quick-thinking, has helped the Lake Worth Monster case maintain a mysterious spotlight over the years.

The resulting photo shows a somewhat blurry figure standing or crouching in the grass with its back to the camera. Its body appears to be covered in white or whitish-gray fur with no other discernible details, such as face, hands, arms, or legs—or horns. Given the ambiguous nature of the photo, it's not possible to rule out a hoax, but there's no doubt that something physical was standing there long enough to be photographed.

A few days after taking the photo, Plaster showed it to Sallie Ann Clarke, who thought it could be a snapshot of the actual beast. Plaster took her to the place where it had been taken so they could get a better idea of the scene. After some analysis, they realized the subject of the photo had been standing in a ditch next to a tree. Using the tree as a height reference, they estimated that it was around seven feet tall.

As far as the photo being a hoax perpetrated by Plaster, that seems out of the question. By all appearances, Plaster was a sober, honest person and respected entrepreneur who would not be prone to lies or pranks. In fact, he felt if anything, *he* might have been pranked. In a 2006 interview with the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Plaster said: "Looking back, I realize that when we drove by, it stood up. Whatever it was, it wanted to be seen. I don't think an animal would have acted that way."^[20]

The blurry, ambiguous nature of the photo makes it hard to tell just what it is, even with modern digital enhancement tools. This seems typical for photos of suspected cryptid creatures such as the Lake Worth Monster or Bigfoot.^[iv] That hasn't stopped cryptid enthusiasts from debating the

validity of the photo over the years with it having been posted hundreds of times on the Internet. The proliferation of interest and speculation about the photo was something that Plaster was unaware of until reporter Bud Kennedy of the *Star-Telegram* informed him during the interview in 2006. According to Kennedy, Plaster seemed amazed and embarrassed by the fact. “It’s strange, the things that happen,” Plaster remarked to Kennedy. “I don’t know what gets in people’s heads.”^[21]

The photo was taken with a Polaroid instant camera, which allows the photographer to extract the snapshot as it developed on the spot.^[v] This meant there was only one copy with no negative for further original reproductions. Plaster gave the original print—the only print—to Sallie Ann Clarke, who passed away in 2009.^[vi]

Sadly, Allen Plaster has also passed away, leaving his photographic legacy to proliferate on the Internet despite his skeptical view in hindsight. I eventually learned the identity of the couple that was with him that night, but I have never been able to get their perspective on the matter since the husband is now deceased and the wife, if she is still living, has been impossible to reach.

“If I’d been smoking pot or drinking alcohol back then, I could blame that,” Plaster quipped during the 2006 interview. “But my friends were all terribly boring. That’s why we were out driving around the lake every night. We were coffee and Dr Pepper people, staying out late.”

It is ultimately impossible to tell if this photo depicts a living creature of the unknown kind or a person wearing a costume or perhaps a rug, but either way it stands as the most intriguing photo of the purported beast. However, it’s not the only one. Bobby Brooks, who created the illustration for Clarke’s book, also managed to photograph something in the Lake Worth woods.

Brooks told me that sometime after Clarke sent her book off to the printer and prior to Plaster’s photo (probably around November 3), he was driving along one of the roads near Greer Island after midnight when something big ran across the road. It darted through the hazy beam of his headlights and jumped over a wire fence at the edge of the woods. It then stood next to the fence for several seconds.

Like Plaster, Brooks had a Polaroid instant camera in the car with him. He grabbed it and quickly snapped a photo, hardly taking time to aim.

The camera instantly spit out the photo, which he left dangling as he snapped a second one just before the subject disappeared into the darkness.

Brooks said he first thought it might have been a large deer, but as the photos developed he realized it was something very different. The best of his photos shows a light-colored, humanoid figure standing in profile near some tree branches. It is hard to gauge the height of the subject, but it resembles descriptions of the Lake Worth Monster, as well as the subject in Plaster's photo. Brooks admits that it may or may not be the actual creature. He can only say that something ran across the road in front of him and he managed to snap a few photos before it moved out of view.

The following day, Brooks showed the photos to Sallie Ann Clarke, who found them intriguing enough to share with the *National Enquirer*. The tabloid publication had gotten wind of the hubbub at Lake Worth and wanted to cover the story. Brooks said he remembers talking to a representative from the publication prior to the arrival of their reporters. The representative asked if he would be willing to participate in an on-site interview. Brooks agreed, and along with Clarke, he met two men from the *Enquirer* at Greer Island. The men took notes and snapped photos as Brooks and Clarke relayed various information. When they finished, the reporters headed off, assuring the duo that an article would soon appear in the publication.

Sure enough, Brooks said that a couple of months later the *National Enquirer* ran their story on the Lake Worth Monster. The article, titled "7-Foot Monsters Across United States," featured details about the sightings along with Allen Plaster's photo and a photo of Brooks pointing to the area near the fence where he had seen and photographed something.^[vii]

The monster seemed to be active in November, not only posing for photos but resuming its original tactics of aggression. On November 7, 1969, Charles Buchanan set out for an afternoon of fishing at a spot near Greer Island. It was a long day and he didn't have any other place to go, so he decided to sleep there in the back of his pickup truck. He told a news reporter that around 2:00 a.m. he was in his sleeping bag when he was awakened by something shaking his truck. Seconds later, "a hair-covered face heaved itself over the side of the pickup, and two long, hairy arms grabbed Buchanan—sleeping bag and all—and hoisted him in the air, then dropped him."^[22]

Thinking fast, Buchanan reached for some barbeque chicken he'd picked up on the way to lake and shoved it toward the beast. "The monster," Buchanan said, "took it in his mouth, and with guttural noises, loped off through the trees, splashed into the water and began swimming with powerful strokes toward Greer Island." During its run through the trees, it toppled "several four-inch-thick saplings."

Buchanan described it as "about seven and a half feet tall with long arms and short, stubby, deformed fingers." He estimated its weight to be between seven hundred and one thousand pounds, and it looked like a cross between a human and a gorilla or ape. The shaken fisherman said he got into the cab of his pickup and quickly left the scene, but not before he noticed at least one footprint. He said "it was shaped like that of a human foot—except it was 18 inches long, and showed the toes were extra-long—about 2 ½ inches."

Since the alleged creature had been seen running into the lake and presumably swimming to Greer Island, people began to theorize that the creature must be hiding out or living there to avoid being caught. There is a footbridge to Greer Island now, but at the time, the only way to reach the island was by boat or by swimming a considerable distance. The island was (and still is) covered in thick trees, so anything living there would have plenty of cover.

The monster had been reported numerous times in the area of Greer Island, which makes sense, yet witnesses had also reported seeing it along the West Fork of the Trinity River (which feeds the lake) and in a spot to the north known as Lotus March. The areas on the north end of the lake included plenty of boggy marshes and heavily wooded thickets where seclusion and sustenance could easily be found. With the combined areas of islands, woods, and waters, it certainly seemed like a monster's paradise.

Even though Sallie Ann Clarke had already published her book, the additional sightings and incidents inspired her to continue her investigation. Whether it was fascination or a drive to solve the mystery, she continued to visit Lake Worth throughout the winter and spring. Ironically, she would eventually claim to see what she could have only imagined during the writing of her book!



*Polaroid photo taken by Bobby Brooks on or about Nov. 3, 1969
(courtesy of Bobby Brooks)*

CHAPTER 5.

SALLIE AND THE MONSTER



I never had the honor of meeting Mrs. Clarke before she passed away, but a few of my colleagues did. One of these was Sean Whitley, a freelance writer and director who produced the excellent documentary film, *Southern Fried Bigfoot*, in 2007. During the course of the production, Whitley interviewed Clarke, asking her a variety of questions having to do with the book writing process, her thoughts on what the creature might be, and the details of her personal sightings. During the interview, she stated that she had seen the monster not once, but a total of five times!

On the first occasion, Clarke said she visited a location where a sighting was said to have taken place. When she arrived at the location, she found a “big track” measuring “sixteen inches long and five and a half inches wide.”^[23] She was impressed by the track, thinking it could have

been made by the creature, so she made a plaster of paris cast of it. Later, she went to a friend's camper where she decided to try and bait the creature. The result was shocking.

"I put a metal plate with some shrimp in it on the back of the camper, and that thing come up and stood there, and carried off the plate," she told Whitley. "I watched it. Boy, I mean, that thing scared the devil out of me." Clarke's friend (the owner of the camper) apparently had too much to drink and passed out, so unfortunately he did not see the creature. ^[viii]

Clarke lamented that she was not able to photograph it. "I didn't have a camera — I don't know why," she said. "I was looking for him. Well I found him."

The author may have missed out on a photo, but it would not be the only opportunity to meet the monster of her dreams.

"The next time I saw [the monster] was where this boy made this picture," Clarke explained. ^[ix] "I figured that [the monster] had made a trail the way he went. We went up this from the little river. . .and found some berries up there and found a place where [the thing] had used the bathroom a number of times. And then we went down from that hill. There was a big gully, like they'd thrown garbage or something in there, and we went down there."

By now a small crowd was gathering. Clarke was with her secretary and another woman, who had gotten into her car.

"They were sitting in my car, and then another two cars was behind mine and they blew the car horn, and we saw him, when they had the lights on, run past into a barbed wire fence," Clarke said. "[The monster] broke one wire in the fence and went off into the lake water. We got all excited because here we'd seen him, but nobody did anything about it."

"It was just a big, tall white thing," Clarke said when describing what she had seen. "He was pretty tall and his face was flat. I didn't see ears. His hands looked kind of short, kind of nubby. They were past his waist, way down."

Clarke always seemed to refer to the creature as a "he," which is interesting. She either got the impression it was male or felt some connection or empathy that went beyond simply referring to the thing as "it." The next time Clarke claimed to have seen the creature was just as dramatic.

“I went out there one time by myself,” Clarke explained. “I was riding real slow. There was a man and a woman, and a little girl fishing, and right by where they was fishing was a strip of land, and the water was on both sides. That thing was standing right there looking at them. It was moonlight; you could see him. And I said to the man, ‘do you know that monster’s standing over there watching y’all?’ He looked and he saw [the thing] and he said, ‘My God,’ got the baby and their fishhooks, and got in their car and zoomed [off].”

Coincidentally, a woman posted on a WFAA news story several years ago that she and her father had seen the creature sometime in 1969 when she was nine years old. Perhaps these were the same people Clarke had seen fishing.

Sallie Ann said she eventually saw the creature again, this time twice in one night, though the details were never documented. Mrs. Clarke did not provide dates for her encounters either, so it’s hard to place them accurately into the timeline. Suffice to say, the woman who is partly responsible for the longevity of the story may have gotten more than she could have possibly dreamed of when she first drove down to the lake with an old tape recorder and a spark of inspiration. She also came to understand that this was not the first time a monstrous creature or strange entity had been reported around Lake Worth.

A teen named Gary Stanford told Clarke he and his friends had heard rumors about a monster there for at least three years. They referred to it as the “Mud Man,” but did not say whether the description matched that of the current Lake Worth Monster.^[24] Another resident who had lived there for forty years told Clarke he saw something “like the Lake Worth Monster” at least twenty years earlier.

I’ve also spoken to long-time residents who told me there had been rumors of monsters and ghosts swirling around Lake Worth prior to the Summer of Love. I was doing a Bigfoot presentation for a history club in Fort Worth some years ago when several members approached me after the talk. They were familiar with the Lake Worth Monster case, and we began discussing it. The group told me that vague reports of a hairy monster wandering the woods there definitely preceded the newspaper coverage. However, they did not know if the creature had been called by any specific name. I recently did a presentation on the history of the monster at the Lake Worth Public Library, and some of the older attendees affirmed the fact that

rumors of a monstrous creature in the area went back many years. Some of them had even gone to the lake in 1969 to look for the creature, though none of them had been lucky enough to get a glimpse of it.

Fort Worth resident, Mike Kinson, was another witness who claimed to have seen the infamous goat-thing in the summer of '69. Details of his alleged monster sighting are sparse, but that wasn't all he claimed to have seen. During an interview with journalist Jim W. Jones of the *Star-Telegram* in July of 1969, Kinson said that he and others had encountered what looked like "ghosts" on Greer Island long before the current monster sightings. Kinson said the ghostly apparitions appeared as "a great mist in the shape of men."^[25] They were translucent, yet the features of the "men" were still discernible.

"It's hard to explain, and I know it sounds crazy," Kinson admitted, "We thought it was some kind of trick at first."

Kinson said they observed the ghostly creatures on several occasions for at least a year and a half, but said they were difficult to see. He explained that if there were too many people wandering around in the park, they would not appear.

The reporter asked Kinson what the ghosts do after they are sighted. The monster-seeker simply responded: "No one has stayed around long enough to find out."

The presence of ghosts seems unrelated, but that still leaves us with some confusion as to what exactly the Lake Worth Monster is supposed to be since descriptions of the alleged creature differ among the eyewitnesses. Some accounts describe it as having horns like a goat and/or scales like a fish, while others describe it as being large and ape-like, similar to a Bigfoot. Most eyewitnesses agree that the thing is covered in white or light-colored fur or hair, but only a few of them commented on the facial features saying it had a "flat face" and what looked like "scars." And no one claimed to have found footprints that resembled hooves. So what could it be, if not a person or persons in a costume? The prospective answer may be rooted deep in the realms of legend.



*Photo of a suspected track, and Sallie Ann Clarke holding a plaster of paris casting
(courtesy of the Fort Worth Nature Center archives)*

CHAPTER 6.

BEASTS AND BRIDGES



The woods surrounding South Pope Lick Road outside of Louisville, Kentucky, are as creepy as they come. Huge, black walnuts and sycamores crowd among craggy hills and creek beds in a maze of trunks and leaf canopies that often block the sun itself. By night, these hollows come alive with the sound of insects and unseen animals shambling through the dead leaves.

Not far from the road, a huge train trestle cuts a path through the branches high above. It looms in stoic silence between the rush of locomotives like a medieval structure connected to a hidden castle. Below it, the meandering Pope Lick Creek snakes through the woods, flowing under smaller concrete bridges, dingy and eroded by dirt and weather.

David Lewis grew up in the shadow of the trestle in the nearby community of Fern Creek. He wasn't afraid of the woods, but he did think twice when he drove over the small bridge on Pope Lick Road. For years he

and his neighbors had heard rumors of a monster who lurked there. The description was vague, but enough to paint a disturbing yet thrilling picture of a hairy, man-like beast.

During their teens, Lewis and his friends would often frequent the bridge in hopes of catching a glimpse of the creature. It was a fun pastime, even if they never saw anything. But they did.

One night in 1964 or 1965, Lewis and several classmates from school were parked in the moonlight on Pope Lick Road when they noticed something looking at them. “To the left of the bridge, I could see him down in a [hollow],” Lewis told my colleague Nathan Couch, author of the brilliant book, *Goatman: Flesh or Folklore?* “He had white hair all over his body and red-looking eyes.”^[26]

Lewis said it resembled a man and stood at least six feet tall yet was covered in hair “like a Bigfoot.” The mysterious entity appeared to be hiding behind a tree and never approached the group. Lewis said he could not see any horns on its head, though rumors had suggested the monster had horns.

Even though this encounter took place in Kentucky, it sounds very much like those reported at Lake Worth. And perhaps that’s not coincidental. Pope Lick Road and the ominous train trestle have long been associated with a goatman legend known as the Pope Lick Monster. In the years that followed Lewis’s sighting, other witnesses claimed to have seen something that very much resembles the Lake Worth Monster: a furry, alabaster-colored thing that looked either ape-like or goat-like yet walked on two legs.

Rumors of the Pope Lick Monster are thought to predate the Lake Worth Monster, but it was not until 1984 that the Kentucky creature began to receive public news coverage. In May of that year, a twenty-year-old man was attempting to walk across the towering Pope Lick Trestle when he fell seventy-four feet, which almost killed him. Five years earlier, a teenager had also fallen when a train approached. He suffered severe bodily injuries, but somehow survived.

The Pope Lick Trestle, built in 1929, is an impressive work of wood and metal. It spans 773 feet between two hills allowing train passage through a remote part of Jefferson County. At its highest point, it stands eighty feet above the craggy creek below. Over the years, the area along South Pope Lick Road near the trestle has served as a sort of Lover’s Lane

hangout where teens gather to socialize, drink, and fornicate. The ominous bridge became part of the attraction as daring individuals tried to prove their bravery by walking across the expanse. The height is absolutely precarious, but that's only part of the danger. Once on the trestle, there is nowhere to retreat if a train comes barreling down the track. There are no walkways, handrails, or ledges. So anyone caught on the bridge during a train passage is forced to either hang from the rail ties or take their chances by jumping from its incredible height to avoid being hit. Officials from Norfolk Southern, the rail company who owns the trestle, explained that the train takes five to eight minutes to cross. An average person cannot hang from the structure that long before the intense noise and vibration loosens their grip and causes them to fall.

Over the years, a number of young people have been injured, and in some cases killed as a result of the train. Jack Charles Bahm II was traversing the trestle on February 18, 1989, when he plummeted to his death.^[27] In May 1987, David Wayne Bryant died as a result of injuries caused by jumping from the track to avoid being hit.^[28] Nicholas Jewell was shaken from the railway in 2000, and there have been others.^[29]

The more the fatalities were publicized, the more the Pope Lick Monster became tied to the trestle instead of the smaller bridge. This was reflected in both local stories and advanced by paranormal researchers, who theorized that the kids had been lured onto the deadly trestle by the goatman. They believe that it may possess supernatural powers, such as telepathy or hypnosis, which it uses to lure hapless victims onto the railway like a siren's call. When the train comes, they are forced to hang or jump from the towering height, without the creature having to get blood on its own hands (or hooves), so to speak.

To explain the presence of the monster, locals have repeated various versions of what is essentially an origin story. The most prevalent of these suggests that a circus owner named Silas Garner had obtained a satyr-like creature from the wilds of Canada and incorporated it into his traveling freak show. The goatman-thing became a star attraction, earning Garner a considerable pile of cash as it was displayed across the country. Tragedy struck, however, as the circus was traveling by train through the backwoods of Kentucky. A sudden storm gathered with darkened skies, wailing winds, and thunderous booms. When a bolt of lightning struck the track, it caused the train to derail, killing everyone and everything on board except the

mysterious goatman. The thing managed to escape into the woods around Pope Lick Road where it has remained ever since.

No documents or newspaper articles can be found to support this story, or any of the other variations, which are typical of urban legends. And not only does this reek of urban legendry, the concept of the satyr-like creature itself is a popular figure in similar tales from Washington to Alabama, Maryland to Texas, and beyond. Teenagers from all across North America will likely know some form of a rumor that suggests a so-called goatman lurks near a certain bridge, park, or lonely wooded area. These entities are said to be dangerous and often have an origin story to explain their presence, as we've seen in the case of the Pope Lick Monster. Some variations of the legends even include a sequence of actions that will supposedly conjure the beast: go to a certain location (most often a bridge or train trestle), perform some specific action (such as honking your horn three times), at which time the goatman will emerge to frighten the brave souls, or worse, exact some murderous revenge.

The story of the Pope Lick Monster continues to grow—even inspiring a Halloween type event in Louisville—though the legend of the Maryland Goatman is perhaps the most notorious of them all. This evil satyr has reigned supreme over the fears of teens in Prince George's County, Maryland, for more than half a century. The creature — which is said to be a murderous, axe-wielding humanoid goat—has not only persisted as a blurry mix of urban legend meets cryptid on a local level, but it has also become more widely recognizable as a sinister villain for horror movies, games, and comic books, making the Maryland Goatman the go-to when it comes to universal goatman icons.

Like the Pope Lick Monster, the Maryland Goatman boasts a wild origin story that comes in several variations. The most prominent version is one that involves the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC), a facility run by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), located near Bowie in Prince George's County. According to the story, a BARC scientist known as Dr. Stephen Fletcher was attempting to combine goat and human DNA (for some crazy reason) which resulted in a monstrous mutant who managed to escape and take up residence in the nearby woods.^[30] Of course there is no factual basis for this tale, but that has not hindered the belief that something bizarre is stalking the woods around Bowie. And perhaps it is, if we take the sighting reports at face value.

Over the years, the Maryland Goatman has been reported in numerous locations around Prince George's County including a wooded area behind St. Mark the Evangelist Middle School in Hyattsville, beneath Governor Bridge in Bowie, and within College Park. Governor Bridge, known locally as "Cry Baby" Bridge, even boasts the proverbial action sequence which says if you park beneath the bridge after sunset, you can hear the sounds of a baby crying, or possibly a braying goat.

Sightings of a supposed hairy creature had been circulating around the county for many years, but it wasn't until the late 1960s, around the time of the Lake Worth Monster, that the persona of the Maryland Goatman began to take form. According to files collected in the University of Maryland Folklore Archives, a young man by the name of Dennis Dunleavy said that, in 1967, he and several friends saw a "goatman" in the Lanham area of Prince George's County. Thomas Rooney stated that he was part of an organized party that went in search of the alleged goatman on Tucker Road in Oxon Hill located in the southern portion of Prince George's County. "A five-person team was sent ahead to scout a wooded area," the file states. "The team soon returned in hysterics, with two persons claiming to have seen the creature as it ran up behind them."^[31]

In 1970, a bizarre animal that walked on two legs was observed picking up a dog and carrying it off into the woods along Fletchertown Road in Bowie. Later, a couple parked on Fletchertown Road saw a frightening entity they described as a "half-man, half-goat." Following that, Sanford Lizama and his girlfriend claimed that the goatman ran in front of their car in Oxon Hill. Two girls said they also saw the creature run in front of their car, causing them to swerve and crash. Yet others saw glowing eyes, which they attributed to the rogue satyr.^[32]

On October 27, 1971, the Maryland Goatman was finally cited by the *Prince George's County News* as one of the scariest legends of the area. Two weeks later, the alabaster anomaly received even more press when it was blamed for the death of a dog named Ginger, saying that "a group of teenage girls had heard strange noises and seen a large creature on the night the dog had disappeared." The article went on to explain that sightings of an "animal-like creature that walks on its hind legs" were increasing along Fletchertown Road.^[33]

The sinister satyr's reputation as Maryland's premier bogeyman was ultimately solidified when it was exposed to a larger audience by way of the

Washington Post. On November 30, 1971, the prominent newspaper ran an article with the tantalizing headline: “A Legendary Figure Haunts Remote Pr. George’s Woods.” The article discussed the odd circumstances surrounding the death of Ginger with a statement by Prince George’s County Police, who said that even though they believed the legend was “passed on from generation to generation,” they had admittedly been receiving recent calls about goatman sightings.^[34]

The Maryland Goatman and the Pope Lick Monster share similarities with the generational word-of-mouth stories, the association with a bridge, and even the rumor that the creatures sometimes carry an axe—something that has become a standard accessory for Maryland’s bogey man, judging from the proliferation of illustrations available on the Internet. These monsters seem unique in their character, yet there are still many more of these goat-creatures to be found around the country, even within a short wagon ride from Lake Worth itself!



Depiction of the Maryland Goatman

Art by Jonathan Dodd

CHAPTER 7.

GHOSTS AND GODS



Dusk drew heavy as my girlfriend and I stepped onto the planked wood and steel of Old Alton Bridge. The green waters of Hickory Creek still meander lazily underneath, but the structure has long since been decommissioned, circumvented by a new bridge on a rerouted roadway. The remains of this historic bridge now stand like a huge metal skeleton in a foreboding patch of woods.

We looked down at the basin as the growing darkness began to engulf us along with an army of insects hellbent on tasting our blood. The woods along Hickory Creek are rife with thick brush and swampy lowlands, perfect for breeding bugs and for preserving rumors of ghosts and goatmen. As we slowly walked to the center of the bridge, we surveyed various marks left by previous visitors. We crossed over a huge pentagram at the center, sprayed in crimson, and eventually stopped at what looked like the bloody handprints of child also created with paint. I glanced at April, who

seemed to be both delighted and hesitant in equal measure. The evil imagery is something that is also connected to goatman bridges, conjuring rumors of organized satanic cults, though the symbols are most likely left by teens who have a bottle of spray paint and too much time on their hands, but I digress.

The purpose of our mosquito-filled adventure was an attempt to evoke the infamous Goatman of Old Alton Bridge. This long-running Texas legend suggests that if you knock three times on the steel girders after dark, you will first smell a powerful stench of death followed by the appearance of a hairy, goat-headed humanoid with glowing red eyes. The result of the goatman's visit is potentially frightening or even deadly, but it was a risk we were willing to take for the betterment of this book.

The Old Alton "Goatman" seems to be a different entity than the Lake Worth Monster, but still important to the conversation in terms of comparing goatman legends. And this one is especially interesting because Old Alton Bridge is a mere thirty-eight miles from Lake Worth.

The bridge, located in Denton County, is a one-lane, iron truss structure that spans approximately 146 feet over the winding Hickory Creek. It was constructed in 1884 for the purpose of facilitating passage between the towns of Copper Canyon and Denton. The initial traffic was equestrian and livestock, but later used by people traveling in cars. Old Alton Bridge remained in use until 2001 when the growing vehicle traffic was moved to an adjacent concrete-and-steel bridge with more lanes.

The area around Old Alton Bridge has been increasingly developed, but that doesn't seem to dampen its dark appeal. The bridge attracts hundreds each year, from local teens looking for a secluded place to party to paranormal researchers who hope to capture some evidence of the goatman's presence.

As with the Pope Lick Monster and the Maryland Goatman, the Old Alton Goatman is complete with an origin story that comes in various forms. The one that has become standard tells of an African American entrepreneur named Oscar Washburn who supposedly lived near the bridge back in the early 1900s. Washburn, who lived there with his family, made a living as goat herder and was known far and wide for his excellent meats, milk, and cheese. To help customers find his farm, Washburn hung a sign on the bridge that informed: "THIS WAY TO THE GOATMAN." All good, except this was a time of terrible racial tensions, so the apparent success of

an African American farmer infuriated the local chapter of the Ku Klux Klan. They were so incensed they decided to act.

On a dark night in 1938, a mob of masked Klansmen allegedly stormed into Washburn's meager home and dragged the Goatman to the bridge. There they tied a rope to the structure, slipped a noose over his head, and flung him over the side as he pled for his family's safety. The evil fools figured that would be it, but when they looked over the side to make sure the Goatman was dead, they were shocked to see an empty noose swinging over the undisturbed waters of the creek below.

The Klansmen frantically searched the area but could not find Washburn or his body anywhere. Fearing that some strange force was at work, they returned to Washburn's shack and burned it down with his family inside. As their screams faded in the fiery blaze, they say a curse was born, causing the Goatman's vengeful spirit to haunt the bridge forever more. ^[35]

After a bit of research, I found out there actually was an Oscar Washburn (W. O. Washburn) living in the Denton area with his wife and "several children" in the early 1900s. However, he was not lynched. This man was shot and killed by his brother-in-law, F. O. Miller, in 1917 at the age of thirty-eight. ^[36]

Even though Washburn was not hanged, tragic lynchings like this did occur. And one would not be surprised if the victim did return to haunt an area where he and his family were so violently and unjustly murdered.

There are a few other versions of the Alton Bridge Goatman's origin story that are similar yet involve different characters, so the truth is hazy. But suffice to say this is on par with other goatman legends. The difference here is that this one seems to fall more into the ghost category than cryptid. I could find no solid reports of an eyewitness claiming to have seen a physical "goatman" on or near the bridge; however, there are some creepy stories.

While investigating the bridge for their web series, *Buzzfeed Unsolved*, hosts Ryan Bergara and Shane Madej were told of an incident that raises an eyebrow. A young man said he was at the bridge one night with a friend, when they heard a disembodied voice tell them to get off the bridge.

"After he and his friend heard the voice, he ran off the bridge while his friend stayed," Bergara told a reporter from the *Dallas Observer*. "He

then reportedly watched his friend get dragged toward the railing of the bridge and flipped into the water below.”^[32] (It’s a pretty good distance to the water, so that would be an unpleasant fall no matter how it happened.)

Josh “Wolf” Turner, host of the popular *Paranormal Round Table* podcast, told me he and several friends were exploring Old Alton Bridge one evening when they saw a strange blue glow in the water below. He can’t say if it has anything to do with the haunted nature of the bridge, but either way they could not figure out just what it was. Turner and others have also noted unusual cold spots or an overall feeling of negative energy, as if the area is cursed or haunted.

April and I arrived just before sundown and parked my truck in a small dirt clearing just off the road. A metal rail prevents vehicle traffic to the bridge, but a gravel trail provides access by foot. The walking path also connects to the Elm Fork Trail, which allows hiking along the wooded creek bank.

There were a few cars already parked there when we arrived, but we only saw one couple with a very small child walking near the bridge. Before we saw them, we heard what sounded like the cries of a small child—something that is often associated with legend-bearing bridges—but it turned out to be sounds made by the child, not those of the ghostly kind.

As we made our way toward the bridge, three teens emerged from the woods, walking quickly toward the parking area. The female of the group complimented April on her outfit before we turned the corner and could no longer see them. We took a few photos of the woods and then ascended the wooden planks. As nightfall drew near, we had the bridge to ourselves.

After examining the graffiti and walking the entirety of the bridge, we surveyed the darkening creek bottom. It is indeed a spooky-looking place. We didn’t necessarily sense a negative energy, but the location does seem to have a strange vibe, the same kind of thing I’ve felt along parts of Boggy Creek or in the TNT area of West Virginia where the legendary Mothman has been sighted. I suppose my preconceived knowledge of the lore could have influenced my perception, but regardless the place is creepy.

April and I stood quietly for several minutes before I finally decided to knock three times on one of the steel truss girders, as the legend commands. The metallic noise echoed across the basin below. I

immediately scanned the woods around us while April did the same, looking for any signs of a goatman or ghostly presence. We were both drawn to a cluster of trees near the Elm Fork Trail entrance. In the hazy light of deep dusk, I noticed one of the trees took on the form of a two-legged humanoid. April noticed it too, giving us a brief jolt of hope . . . or fear. However, the more we focused on it, the more we could tell it was an illusion created by a gnarled, twisted trunk, an upright metal pole, and some contrasting shadows. I was disappointed that it wasn't the form of the legendary goatman. Or was it? Perhaps these entities rely on the very shadows and seeds of our doubt in order to persist in the modern age.

After some additional attempts to conjure the goatman and an increased assault by mosquitos, we finally headed back to the car satisfied that the spooky reputation of Old Alton Bridge was well deserved and would likely endure for as long as spooky tales are told in Texas.

Whether the goatman is said to be a hybrid animal, a cryptid, or a ghost, the very embodiment of a such a creature is steeped in mythology, folklore, and urban legend. Perhaps the earliest concept of a "half man, half goat" can be traced back to the "satyrs" of Greek mythology. According to the World History Encyclopedia:

Satyrs (aka silens) often appear in Greek myths as lustful and wine-loving wild men of nature who had some animal features. Intelligent yet mischievous, lewd yet skilled in music, the physique of the satyrs reflects their seemingly conflicting personality traits. Early depictions of satyrs show them as men with a horse's tail and ears while later versions are half-man and half-goat, sometimes with entire goat legs or just hooved feet. The elements of goat may reflect a later association with the pastoral god Pan, also thought to inhabit forest areas. Satyrs often have snubbed noses, wild-looking hair, and long beards. A weapon of the satyr was the thyrsus, a staff entwined with ivy and topped with a pinecone. These forest dwellers were frequent companions or followers of Dionysos, the Greek god of wine and merriment, and made up his thiasos or troupe, which included nymphs and maenads.

[\[38\]](#)

Most of us are familiar with the image of the Greek god, Pan. This rustic satyr figure is almost always depicted as having the upper body of a man with the legs of a goat and horns on his head. He also holds his signature pan flute made of reeds. As the God of the Wild, Pan is naturally associated with wooded areas and pasturelands, from which his name is derived. The worship of Pan began in rural areas, away from cities, since these areas did not have temples or large buildings for that purpose. Worshippers would instead gather in forests, caves, or grottos, where the connection to a more primitive life was natural.

The similarities to the goatmen of urban legend are obvious both in bodily form and in the areas which they are supposedly seen. These are always rural, wooded areas where nature resists the advancement of modern cities. As with Lake Worth, Pope Lick, and others, these are also places known as Lover's Lanes where teenagers go to drink and lustful couples explore their desires. This is reflected in the lustful nature of the satyrs who were often guilty of excessive sexual urges and overindulgence of wine. In mythology, these animal-like creatures of the wild symbolized the dangers of unrestraint.^[39]

The parallels between what is essentially modern folklore (urban legend) and age-old mythology cannot go unnoticed in these cases, even if it is purely coincidental. In other words, our tendency to be fascinated, scared, and drawn to these half-man, half-animal entities may be something rooted deep in our human psyche that influences our perception of what we might be seeing in the shadowy, moonlit darkness. Or it might be a modern embodiment of creatures that have dwelled among us all along, whose stories can only be explained by framing them as gods or bogeymen.

The biology of a half man, half goat seems very implausible without some kind of paranormal explanation. But are witnesses really seeing a goatman, or are they merely projecting the persona onto something else that is equally mysterious, yet perhaps a bit more plausible?

What I have yet to mention is that, like Lake Worth, other notorious goatman hot spots often include sightings of an ape-like creature whose history often predates the goatman sightings or is at least concurrent. In the case of the Maryland Goatman, for example, author and preeminent authority on the legend, Mark Opsasnick, has logged numerous sighting reports in Prince George's County that describe a creature that resembles a Bigfoot with light-colored hair. In fact, he believes the legend of the iconic,

axe-wielding goatman may have developed from sightings of an ape-like creature dating back to 1957!

During the night of August 1, 1957, Mr. and Mrs. Revery Garner were pulling into the driveway of their rural home in Upper Marlboro (south of Fletchertown Road in Prince George's County) when a large animal ran in front of the car. Mr. Garner hit the brakes, but not before hitting the animal which they would later describe as a "large, gorilla-like creature." After the collision, the thing came toward the car with "red beady eyes." It must not have been critically injured because it promptly escaped into the darkness. ^[40]

Garner's home was located on a stretch of isolated road in the countryside where sightings of wild animals were not out of the ordinary; however, this was not something they could easily identify.

The following night, Mrs. Francis Brady, who lived near the Garners, was horrified to see a "large black animal" looking at her through her bedroom window. When she screamed, Mr. Brady grabbed his shotgun and ran outside. He fired at the creature, but it managed to escape into the woods. The Bradys were so shaken by the incident, they fled the home. ^[41]

Over the course of the week, the creature was reportedly seen by hundreds of other residents in the Forestville-Ritchie area of the county. Local news picked up on the story, dubbing the creature the "Abominable Phantom." The ensuing panic prompted the Prince George's County Police to organize a full-scale monster hunt. An animal expert from Washington was taken to see some tracks that he felt were probably left by "some sort of ape weighing 400 to 500 pounds." For all of their efforts, however, the beast remained elusive. ^[42]

The Garners later told a reporter from the *Evening Star* newspaper that they now believed they had hit a neighbor's chow dog instead of something like a gorilla. The chow had developed a limp, so they concluded it must have been the strange, hairy animal that collided with their car bumper. As my colleague Nathan Couch observed in his *Goatman* book, this may account for the initial incident at the Garners' home but could hardly explain the thing the Bradys saw looking in their window or how hundreds of other people would report a mysterious ape-like creature in the area if it was merely a dog. The organized searches for the monster were promptly called off and the frenzy quickly faded. But perhaps not in the minds of the local residents. Goatman authority Mark Opsasnick believes

the Abominable Phantom incidents may have simmered in local lore to eventually rise again as the Goatman of Prince George's County.^[43]

The evolution of local urban legends—moving from one road to another road or a bridge, or transforming from a ghost or ape to an axe-wielding, bipedal goat—is a far more complicated discussion involving the psychology of modern folklore and the transmutation of spoken stories, but the point here is that just like in the case of our Greer Island Goatman, we also have a slew of unexplained creature sightings that sound a lot like Bigfoot. In fact, the majority of the eyewitness accounts at Lake Worth describe the creature as a hairy hominoid with the ability to walk upright and a footprint that looks like a human's yet is larger than a typical human foot. Perhaps the Lake Worth Monster is not a goatman, bobcat, or human impostor at all. Perhaps it's something that has a much more phenomenal history, even in the Lone Star State.



*Old Alton Bridge
(photo by the author)*



*“Satyr Playing Lyre” traditional engraving by Sebald Beham
(courtesy of the Rosenwald Collection)*

CHAPTER 8.

THE BIGFOOT CONNECTION



Though the alleged creature roaming the shores of Lake Worth was initially described as a half man, half goat, the subsequent descriptions of a bipedal ape-like creature could potentially qualify the creature for inclusion in the greater pantheon of Bigfoot mysteries. The hair color of a Bigfoot is typically described as black or dark brown but has also been reported in a variety of other colors including blond, red, gray, and yes, white.

The concept of Bigfoot is surely familiar to almost everyone these days with the creature having ascended well beyond a regional legend to a veritable pop culture icon. The creature's existence is widely refuted by mainstream science, yet there have been literally thousands of sightings reported all over North America. And believe it or not, this includes a vast number of sightings in Texas.

Bigfoot is not the first thing one probably thinks of when thinking of Texas, but this possibility might not be as impossible as it seems. As far as potential habitat, Texas is only second to Alaska in total acreage of forest land. The eastern portion of the state, where much of the forest land is located, boasts upward of twelve million acres alone.^[44] The rest of the state, while made up of varying ecoregions of coastal marshes, prairies, grasslands, desert valleys, and arid plateaus, also offers plenty of rugged, remote, and natural environments. Bigfoot encounters have been reported in more than sixty-six counties in Texas, and with each passing year there are more reports, especially in the eastern portion where the ecological conditions are most suited for such a thing. There are not as many present-day reports of Bigfoot-like creatures in and around the Dallas–Fort Worth area, but in 1969, the metroplex was far less developed than it is now, providing a potential habitat, or at least a thoroughfare for travel.

In 1963, just a few years prior to the Lake Worth monster mania, the *Denton Record-Chronicle* reported that residents near the town of Denton, Texas, claimed to have seen a “hairy, eight-foot thing” stomping around in a creek bed. The creature, referred to in the article as “the monster,” was said to move quickly and was thought to hide under bridges for shelter. Police attempted to search for the thing but had no luck in tracking it down. While further details are sketchy, this is interesting because not only is Denton the home of the Alton Bridge Goatman, but it’s a mere thirty miles north of Lake Worth.^[45]

Years earlier, a frightening hairy thing was seen outside a schoolhouse in Ellis County, approximately forty miles southeast of Lake Worth. Josh Turner, curator of a small natural history museum in Cleburne, Texas, (and no relation to Josh “Wolf” Turner, host of the *Paranormal Round Table* podcast) told me that in the 1930s his grandmother, Pauline Beaty, was a child living the small town of Cedar Hill. The area was heavily wooded in those days, and there had been several sightings of what her family referred to as a “wild man.”^[x]

One afternoon while Pauline and her classmates were having recess outside their one-room schoolhouse, two of the boys ran back inside screaming in terror. They told the teacher they had seen a big, hairy man lurking at the edge of the woods. The teacher, realizing it was no joke, quickly ushered all the students into the schoolhouse and locked the door. After some frantic discussions, two of the older boys volunteered to go for

help. There was no phone at the schoolhouse, so this required them to bravely run on foot to the town. While the boys were gone, the teacher and students could hear thrashing, screaming, and ranting from the woods. By the time help arrived, however, whatever had been there was gone.

At one of my book signings, I met a man who had an interesting story of his own to add. Floyd Fry told me he and his family were picnicking at Grapevine Lake in the late 1950s when he found some very unusual tracks. Grapevine Lake, located only twenty miles northeast of Lake Worth, is now very urbanized, but at the time was just being developed for recreation. Even the picnic sites were essentially clearings cut from the thick trees.

Fry was about eight years old at the time, and having no similarly aged playmates present, he was left to wander around the area by himself.

“I wasn’t paying attention and went farther than I thought away from my parents,” he explained. “That’s where I found some giant-sized footprints in the sand.”

The footprints came from a tree line, crossed an open area of freshly cleared land, and disappeared into the trees on the other side. “Even as a child, what struck me was the size of the prints,” Fry recalled. “They were huge, barefoot prints, and I knew they were too large for a normal man. My thought was they must have been made by a giant.”

Apprehensive yet curious, Fry followed the footsteps into the woods along what appeared to be a game trail. “I lost the footprints there but continued following the trail for a short way among the trees,” he said. “But I became too frightened and turned back.”

Young Floyd ran back to where his parents were still enjoying their picnic. He told them what he had found and urged them to look, but they brushed it off thinking he was joking or exaggerating. At the time Fry didn’t connect the event to Bigfoot, but in retrospect he wonders if such a creature could have been responsible for the seemingly impossible imprints.

Whatever was responsible for the sightings and footprints apparently remained in the area with incidents running nearly concurrently with the Lake Worth Monster flap. That summer, as the frenzy was brewing in Lake Worth, two teens encountered a similar entity in Ellis County (where the “wild man” had been seen in the 1930s). According to the witness, she and her boyfriend had decided to picnic on his parents’ farm near Sardis. The area was thickly wooded with some open pastures and

creeks running through the property, making it a nice place for an isolated, outdoor respite.

The couple drove to the location in the evening, bringing food and their German Shepherd dog. They found a spot in an open area near a pond surrounded by tall reeds, where they sat down to enjoy their meal. As they were eating, however, the dog began to act strangely. It started pacing back and forth and growling. The couple could see the hair on the dog's neck stand up as it looked toward the pond and started barking. According to the witness:

I looked around and when I looked toward the pond, there was an ape-like creature that appeared to be observing us. At the time, I didn't want to believe what I was seeing. It was an ape-like creature but not an ape. The way I think of it now is that it looked like what you would think a very ancient, primitive man might look like, but still retaining some ape-like qualities. It was just getting dark but was not completely dark, so I can't describe certain details such as facial features. Maybe I can't remember some of the details because I was so frightened. It had its right arm outward and away from its body, holding the reeds to one side and just appeared to be observing us. It was very powerfully built, especially in the shoulder and chest area. It was covered with hair and looked like it had no neck. The left arm was hanging down at its side and it extended to a length to its knees. ^[46]

The teens were completely overtaken with fright. They quickly picked up their items and dashed to the vehicle with the dog close behind. There was a gate to the property, so they had to stop and open it before they could drive out. When the boyfriend got out to open and close the gate, they were both apprehensive, thinking the ape-like creature might suddenly appear. They drove as fast as they could from the area, never looking back.

An interesting aspect about these sightings is that they all occurred in proximity to the Trinity River corridor. This significant waterway cuts a long, snaky path as it runs from North Texas all the way south to the Gulf of Mexico. Along the way it occasionally spills into reservoirs, such as Lake Worth.

The Trinity River network begins north of Lake Worth as four different feeder branches: East Fork, Elm Fork, West Fork, and Clear Fork. These waterways flow in a southeasterly direction eventually joining together to form the larger river. Clear Fork and West Fork converge in Fort Worth. That section is then joined by the Elm Fork in Dallas, and finally merges with the East Fork in Kaufman County. As the feeders meander on their paths toward Kaufman County, they pass through the areas of Denton, Lake Worth, Grapevine Lake, and Ellis County where I have logged various apeman and goatman reports. It's like a web of mystery connected by the very waters that mingle with Lake Worth . . . and it doesn't end there.

Further south along the unified Trinity River corridor we eventually cross a long, lonely body of water called Chambers Creek. This creek, which spans sixty-seven miles through Ellis and Navarro counties, is said to be the home of a similar hairy creature known as the Chambers Creek Monster, although, amazingly, some stories identify it as the "Emhouse Goatman," so named for the proximity to Emhouse, Texas.

In the first public report, a man claimed that his father, Kenneth, and a friend were fishing along the creek between the towns of Avalon and Ennis in 1964 when "a large, hulking, hairy creature, approximately 8 to 10 feet tall appeared before them and roared." The men panicked and quickly made their way out of the creek bottoms. ^[47]

Aside from his father mentioning an old sighting from the 1930s, it was thought to be an isolated incident until my friend Larry Parks tracked down additional witnesses who claimed to have seen something similar near Ennis. According to Parks, the first instance occurred around 1964 when several people were camping near Chambers Creek's low-water crossing at Ensign Road. While cooking fish, they heard something large approaching through the brush. As it got closer, they heard a distinct growling and smelled a putrid odor. When the thing finally emerged, the campers saw that it was a big, hair-covered creature like a Bigfoot.

The second incident occurred a few years later, around the coincidental year of 1969. In this case a group of young men were walking in the woods near Chambers Creek when they heard a strange animal sound. They looked around and saw "an 8–9 foot tall, hair-covered creature drop down on all fours and charge towards them with a strange gait." They said it had really long hair, and it definitely wasn't a bear. ^[48]

Whether any these complimentary sightings are somehow related to the Lake Worth Monster is hard to say, but it's for sure the Trinity River is home to some of Texas' best Bigfoot mysteries. The ape-like creatures in these instances were not reported as having white hair, but the Lake Worth Monster is definitely not an exception when it comes to this physical trait. During my research, I've run across plenty of examples where fair-haired beasts were said to be stalking the wilds of Texas and the surrounding states. Like a ghostly version of Bigfoot, these mystery monsters may be rarer, but just as compelling.



A Bigfoot creature seen in Texas

Art by Jonathan Dodd

CHAPTER 9.

WHITE FRIGHTS



We know from movies that Yetis are white, and Bigfoots are brown, right? Wrong. It's not that simple, at least according to real-world reports. Though movies have long presented the fabled Yeti as a white-haired creature, the actual accounts that have poured out of the Himalayan Mountains region over the last one hundred years typically describe a more apeish or feral human-like entity covered in brown hair. With its erroneously coined nickname, the Abominable Snowman, and the desire to often spin it as a bumbling, loveable monster, it is understandable why Hollywood has generally portrayed it as being white. But it's not reflective of the sightings.

The movie representation of Bigfoot is more accurate (surely owing to the famous Patterson-Gimlin film of 1967), yet not all Bigfoot witnesses have reported a creature with brown-toned hair. Reports of black hair are also prominent. This is not a surprising deviation, but when it comes to

other shades like red, blond, and white, it may seem odd and perhaps less credible. However, it stands to reason that if these creatures do exist, then perhaps they have hair color variations just as humans do. This could be the result of genetics or simply the effects of age that turn a once-brown Bigfoot into a gray Grandfoot. Pure white or yellowed hair may also be caused by albinism, a condition that can affect mammalian animals including gorillas (though only one example of this variant has ever been found).

Whatever the reason may be for the light hair, accounts of Bigfoot-like creatures with this trait are not as rare as one might expect. An interesting example comes from the town of Red Oak in the now familiar county of Ellis (forty miles from Lake Worth). According to a report submitted to an organization known as the Western Bigfoot Society, in 1938, four men were coon hunting one night in the heavy woods surrounding Red Oak Creek. As they sat in camp waiting for their dogs to sniff out a raccoon, they noticed the dogs weren't barking as they usually did on the hunts and were instead sitting close to the fire acting scared.

"About that time they noticed a huge white-haired figure standing about 30 or so yards from the fire," Randall, one of the witness's sons, stated. "It was just standing there watching them." The frightened hunters quickly grabbed their guns and dogs and fled from the bottoms. The next day they told others of the encounter, but no one believed their story. "My father was a very honest man . . . and I know his story to be true," Randall affirmed.^[49]

While doing a presentation on the Lake Worth Monster at the Lake Worth Monster Bash several years ago, I was approached by a well-spoken woman named Tinia Smith. Smith told me that she had always believed the Lake Worth creature may have been a Bigfoot based on something her father had seen in the area around 1955. She said her father, Robert Kirkeby, was hunting for squirrels one evening in Decatur (a mere thirty-five miles northwest of Lake Worth) when he was shocked to see what he called a "white ape" looking at him from the woods.

"It was very large, and it looked him square in the eye, then turned and walked away," Smith explained. "It made a huge impact on his life, and he never forgot it or made peace with it. None of his peers believed him, but I always did."

The fact that Kirkeby saw something ape-like with white hair only fifteen years prior to the Lake Worth frenzy is extremely interesting.

Just four years prior to the Lake Worth flap, a group of kids reportedly saw something similar ten miles north of the lake. According to my colleague Jim Whitehead, the kids were walking through Dido Cemetery east of Eagle Mountain Lake when they saw a tall, upright, white figure running through the grounds.

I received another such report from a man in Oklahoma, north of Texas. It was the summer of 1994 and he and a friend had gone catfishing on the North Canadian River in Blaine County. It was a clear night with a full moon and a slight breeze. Around 10:00 p.m., they had just parked their truck and were starting to unload their boat when they heard something moving in the nearby wood line. They looked up to see a huge, Bigfoot-like creature with a body covered in white hair walking through the trees. It was breaking branches as it went, upright on two legs the entire time. The witness described it as being very large with long arms and hands that hung below its knees.

The spooky situation was made even more alarming by an eerie “dead silence.” Everything—including crickets, frogs, and other denizens of the night—had gone completely quiet. The massive creature then veered from the woods and started approaching the back of their truck. The men were so frightened, they jumped in the vehicle and sped off.

An upright, ape-like creature with white hair has been reportedly seen numerous times in the area of Stinchcomb Wildlife Refuge east of Blaine County. Perhaps not coincidentally, the refuge is located on the banks of the very same North Canadian River. There have been so many reports, the creature here has often been referred to by locals as the “White Witch of Stinchcomb.” The term *witch* may imply that it is human, but the description is that of a Bigfoot-like thing covered in white hair.

Stinchcomb is quite close to the metropolitan spread of Oklahoma City, so the possibility of huge, undocumented creatures hiding out there seems very unlikely, yet it’s become something of a monstrous hotspot. Not only have there been reports of Bigfoot, but there have been sightings of what can only be described as “pterodactyls.” My colleague Ken Gerhard and I interviewed two sets of multiple witness who said they saw such a prehistoric creature flying in the skies above Stinchcomb between 2014 and 2016!

Chance Lee Ellis told me he saw an ape-like creature with light-colored hair in Durant, Oklahoma around 1986. He and his mother were living on a farm at the time. One evening just after sundown, he and a friend were walking along a creek, navigating by flashlight, when they were surprised to see a strange, human-like figure.

“It was standing upright with its right arm facing us,” Ellis recalled. “As we got closer, it turned and looked at us and that’s when we could tell that we were not sure exactly what it was. It had gray hair and modeling-clay, grayish skin on its face. The hair was not extremely thick so you could see the skin through it in several different spots. It was between six and seven feet tall and was definitely not a man.”

The creature turned and began walking down the creek, pausing occasionally to look back at the boys. “For some reason we were not afraid of it at this time, so we followed it,” Ellis said. They followed the strange creature until it eventually walked into the trees and blended into the shadows. At that point, they were too spooked to follow it any further.

Back in Texas, Debi Porch told me she saw a similar, light-colored creature on September 22, 2018, in the Sam Houston National Forest north of Houston. It was late, and she was driving into a deserted trailhead with a friend when suddenly a huge, bipedal animal covered in white or light gray hair appeared in the headlight beam.

“There was a curve in the area that I wasn’t aware of and there were absolutely no lights out there other than my headlights,” she told me. “As I followed that curve around, my headlights hit it. It was on a small hill running down into a creek bed.”

The strange animal ran out of sight. Porch quickly turned the truck around and drove along the same path but never saw it again.

“Its hair looked to be at least three to four inches long,” she estimated. “It was blowing in the wind on its back and arms as it ran. I went back the next day and found a single print back in the woods on the other side of the creek in the area it came from. It measured sixteen and a half inches long and eight and a half inches wide.”

One final example brings us back to the ever-mysterious Trinity River corridor. In this case, members of a family living near Athens, Texas, claim to have experienced a series of truly bizarre and frightening incidents involving a white-haired creature.

According to the family, they were living on a twenty-seven-acre property near Athens in the years of 1989 and 1990 when the incidents occurred. One of the witnesses, “Amanda,” who was a teen at the time, said the family consisted of her mother, brother, and sister-in-law. They lived in a rental house on the property that included a pond surrounded by woods and open pastures.

Shortly after they moved in, the family began to hear strange noises in the woods surrounding the house. The most prominent of the noises sounded like an eerie, howling scream. The mother dismissed it as the calls of a wild cat and, at first, they thought it was funny because the sound would often scare visitors. The family jokingly referred to it as the “banshee.” But things became much less humorous when they began to catch glimpses of some kind of large, white-looking thing in the woods.

The first person to see the thing was a boy who lived nearby. He had come over one night in the summer of 1989 to visit Amanda. They were standing behind the house talking when the guest suddenly had a shocked look on his face. When Amanda asked him what the matter was, he said he had just seen a “large white figure moving from tree to tree hiding behind them.”^[50]

The second person to see something was Amanda’s boyfriend. His truck had broken down while visiting her, so he decided to walk home through the fields since he did not live very far away. He said a “large white figure walked beside him” all the way to a fence at the edge of the property. The boy was so afraid, he just kept looking forward and did not try to look directly at the figure for fear it would attack him.

Amanda finally encountered the thing herself when she was walking down a road one night with a friend. “[This] thing came from behind a tree, ripped a huge tree limb off and threw it,” she recalled. “We were so frightened. We turned and ran.”^[51]

Amanda outran her friend, who said he could feel it breathing down his neck as they fled toward his house for safety. They jumped over the gate in front of his property where several more of their friends were standing. They all noticed “something white” had been pursuing them but then suddenly disappeared in the dark woods.

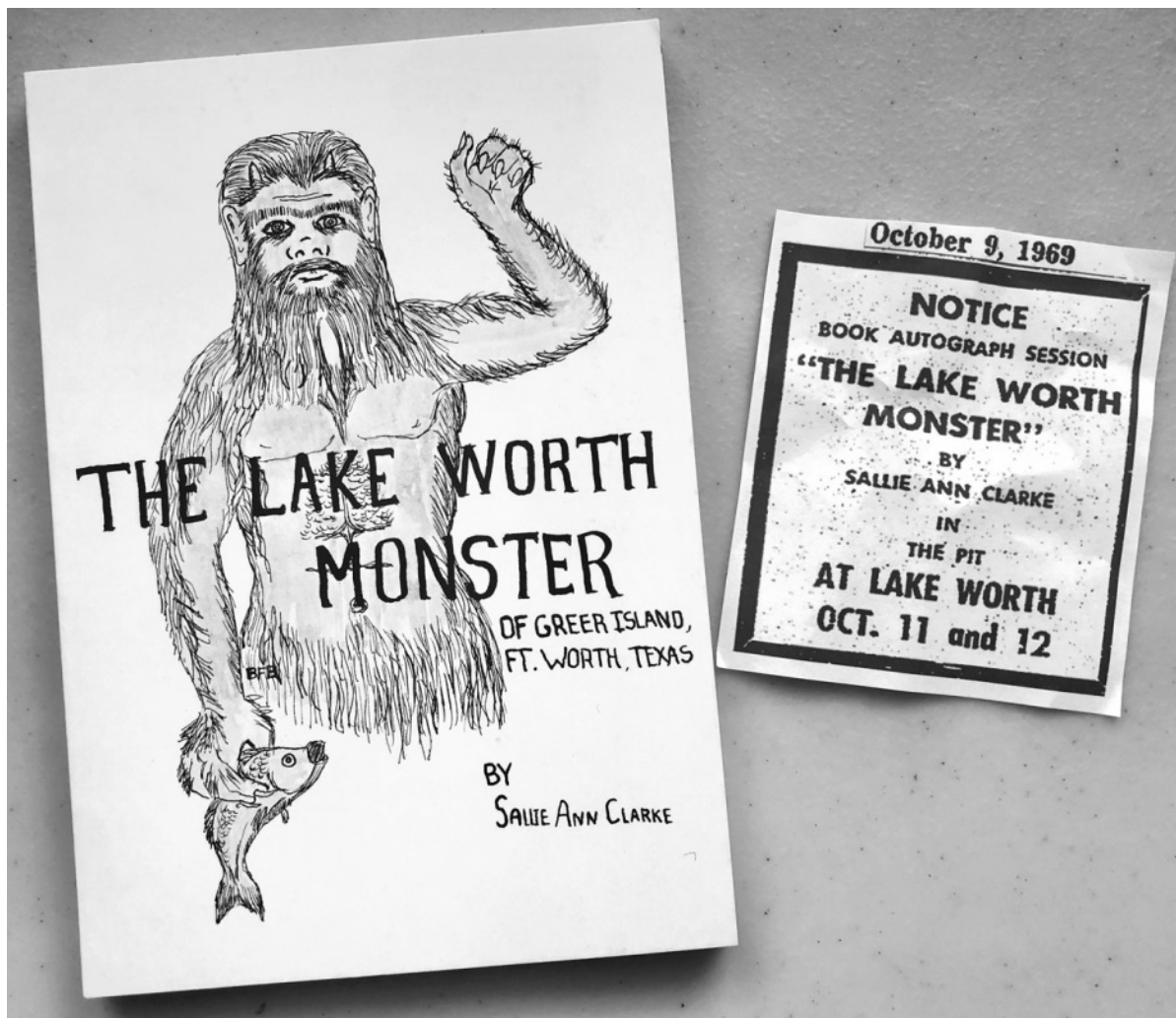
On other occasions the thing had been seen by additional visitors to their property and by a neighbor as he rode his ATV through the backwoods.

Prominent Texas Bigfoot researcher Craig Woolheater interviewed Amanda, who he said was initially hesitant to share the story for fear of ridicule. Eventually she opened up and told Woolheater everything that she could remember about the harrowing experiences while living on the secluded rental property. She said the subject in question had been seen occasionally over the two-year period up until they moved as a result of the scary activity. Amanda described the banshee thing—or creature—as being around eight feet tall with white hair all over its body. She estimated it probably weighed between two hundred fifty and three hundred pounds. The family initially thought of it as a ghost, but it seemed more like some kind of creature judging from the movements and the presumably connected vocalizations. She said that when they heard the howl, the animals in the vicinity would begin to react wildly with fear and nervousness.

The similarities to the Lake Worth Monster case cannot be overlooked. Anomalies abound everywhere, it seems, with hairy, white things roaming far and wide across Texas and the surrounding states. The lack of irrefutable physical evidence certainly fuels skepticism, and understandably so, but that in and of itself does not mean that there isn't something to the phenomenon.

Over the years, the association between the Lake Worth Monster and the Bigfoot phenomenon has been far stronger than its connection to the ubiquitous goatman legends, despite the initial description. It is an association that has held the case in high regard among many Sasquatch enthusiasts. I've often been asked about it during my own travels and appearances. Clarke's book has also become a prized item among this group. I've seen copies go for as much as one hundred dollars. Not bad for homespun publication released more than fifty years ago!

This association with Bigfoot lore is surely strengthened by the fact the Lake Worth Monster does not have a wild "origin story" that attempts to explain it. There was no preexisting legend and no mad science or circus tale concocted later, as we find in other goatman-type cases. This makes the Lake Worth Monster somewhat unique and perhaps more flexible when it comes to trying to categorize it as cryptid or otherwise. As the strange activity around the lake continued into the new decade, it is an association that would only grow stronger.



*Clarke's book and the autograph session advertisement
(book artwork by Bobby Brooks ©1969 Sallie Ann Clarke)*

CHAPTER 10.

BEASTLY BEHAVIOR



Back in Lake Worth, as 1969 rolled into the new decade, sighting reports of the alleged monster began to dwindle along with the monster fever. Perhaps the colder winter weather caused a drop in potential witnesses visiting the lake, or whatever (or whomever) was roaming the backwoods around Greer Island laid low. Whatever the case, 1970 seems to be lacking significant reports.

The only sighting I could verify was one in which the monster was said to have smashed a fence. A newspaper published a photo on October 19, showing Sallie Ann Clarke and three others examining the broken fence. ^[52] It's possible this was the encounter Clarke spoke of when she said a group of people sitting in cars "saw him, when they had the lights on, run past into a barbed wire fence. [The monster] broke one wire in the fence and went off into the lake water." ^[53]

In 1971, interest was briefly rekindled yet again when a report from Marshall, Texas, made the news. The details are sparse, but according to a *Fort Worth Magazine* article, a group of hunters said they encountered something in the woods they could only describe as a “Goat Man.”^[54] Even though Marshall is located three hours east of Lake Worth, some North Texans wondered whether the creature had perhaps made the journey.

Strange reports returned to the Fort Worth area on March 9, 1973, when an airman at Carswell Air Force Base saw a large, hairy animal at Benbrook Lake, thirteen miles south of Lake Worth. Airman Mark Frick said, “He was listening to his radio when he heard a loud growling noise near the lake shore.” The sound was so scary, he retreated to his car. When he switched on the headlights, “an animal resembling a 6 to 7 foot black bear crawled from the shore thirty feet away, and disappeared in the brush.”^[55] Frick was brave enough to give chase, but could not track it down. He later reported the incident to the Benbrook Police Department, who responded by sending officers to the lake to search for the animal. Despite their efforts, no trace of it could be found. The story was covered by the NBC/WBAP-TV news affiliate and appeared the March 14 edition of the *Dallas Morning News* under a headline that asked: “Has ‘Monster’ of Lake Worth Ended Hibernation?”

According to my late friend, Bill Morris, people still talked about the monster around Lake Worth in the years that followed, but actual reports of the creature were rarely confirmed or taken seriously. That didn’t mean strange things weren’t happening, however. Sometime in the 1970s, several high school kids were assaulted by someone or *something* south of Greer Island on the rather ironically named Goat Island (!).

Goat Island, located in the larger, lower half of the lake, is a six-acre sliver of land formed when Lake Worth was impounded in 1911–14. The island has narrow beaches around most of its circumference and some higher, steeper banks in places. The island was given the name as a result of two farmers who rafted their goat herd to the island for sustenance during a drought.^[56]

Gary Woolf responded to the “Lake Worth Monster” episode of my podcast, *Monstro Bizarro*, on my YouTube channel with the following story. (Minor edits have been made for clarity.)

Hello Lyle,

I grew up in the city of Lake Worth and went to school there from 1st grade to 12th. My family and friends all grew up on the lake, swimming, boating, fishing and skiing. I've been to Greer Island many times and have partied in the famous sand pit of the Lake Worth monster tire incident. We all knew about it. We were high school kids in the late '70s.

I have never seen the Goat Man, or the Mud Man of Lake Worth, but I do have a story about an incident that happened to me and my friends one night on Goat Island. Goat Island is in the middle of the western part of the lake. The island does not have any housing or facilities on it. It is a small strip of land popular for swimming and picnicking, and fishing. You need a boat to get to it, although you could swim to it from the west shore of the lake (which is extremely wooded).

As teenagers we would use a friend's dad's boat to get to the island and camp overnight. Nothing unusual ever happened and we just had a good time being out on the lake all night with no supervision. But . . . one night, and the last time any of us camped on the island, something happened that none of us can explain. Someone or something was harassing us. Huge rocks were being thrown at us while we were in the boat near the shore of the island.

We dismissed the first one, thinking it must have been a fish breaking the water. However, we knew it had to have been a huge fish to make that large of a splash. We went on about our business.

We had set up a tent and campsite on the east end of the island. The first splash was about midway along the island. As we drifted toward our campsite on the east end, we were startled by a second splash right near the boat like before (the boat being on the north side of the island approximately 15 yards from the shore). This was strange to us having happened a second time so far from where

the first splash occurred. We were all fisherman and did not feel this was a fish. It sounded like a rock being thrown into the water . . . not a fish. A big rock . . . like a rock you could barely lift over your head to throw into the water. It was 8 or 10 foot at best [from our boat] but there were no other boats there, and the shore was 15 to 20 yards away. We couldn't see or hear anyone on the island.

We decided someone was messing with us, so we started the boat and got our spotlight out to search the island. We went completely around the island, and to our surprise there were no other boats on the island. At this point we were starting to get a bit paranoid about what was going on. We couldn't dismiss it as someone else on the island, but there was nobody.

We were a little spooked but not convinced there was anything really going on, so we decided to go back to camp. There was an old public dock at the campground, and we were pulling the bow of the boat up to the dock. One of my friends was sitting on the nose of the boat with his feet dangling to catch the dock with his feet. Just as his feet hit the dock another huge splash hit the water a few feet from the bow of the boat and the dock! It scared the crap out of us. We backed up with full throttle, my friend trying not to fall off the front of the boat! We sped away from the dock and the campground as fast as we could. Now we are freaked out. There was no doubt someone was on the island with us and was committed to scaring the \$#% out us. But what was more disturbing was the fact that we couldn't see them. So how can you heave such large objects at our boat? We couldn't make any sense of it. We grew up doing this stuff and weren't afraid of things in nature. We were teenagers in the '70s and we really didn't have enough sense to be scared. But we all were. All of this taking place at 1 or 2 [a.m.] in the morning.*

We didn't want to leave our gear on the island for somebody to steal, but we did not want to stay there either.

We decided to return to camp and retrieve our tent and our camp gear. We made a plan to storm the island and have two guys pack and two watch. When we got there we inspected the campsite, tent and all our gear, and it was untouched. We moved fast and took down our camp. Everyone was trying to be brave about it and blow it off, but none of us were very comfortable. If it were someone messing with us, that didn't bother us too much, but it could have been someone with bad intentions, and we didn't want to stay where we weren't wanted. So we decided to stay at my boss's house who lived on the lake. We would just stay the night on his covered dock.

We packed the gear in the boat and were pulling away from the dock when a huge rock hit the water just three feet or so off the front of our boat. We backed up in a panic and hauled @## to the other side of the lake. To this day I have no explanation for what happened. No one I know could throw something that big that far.

While we can't rule out the actions of an elusive person, this incident is rather strange. And, in terms of Bigfoot, it fits with the reported habits. Numerous witnesses, including many I've personally interviewed, claim that huge rocks have been hurled at them through the woods, coming close to hitting them, yet missing by a few feet. This is a scary proposition. Either persons with the ability to lift very heavy rocks are trying to scare hikers, campers, and fisherman by hurling them just past their heads, or something else with an opposable thumb is trying to issue a stern warning. Whatever the case, it aligns with the theory many researchers hold that the Lake Worth Monster is/was a white-haired Bigfoot.

The connection to Bigfoot phenomena was furthered when the Lake Worth story was included in a book titled *Sasquatch: The Apes Among Us* by John Green. Released in 1976, this lengthy tome was an important factor in tying together the disparate history of Bigfoot in the Pacific Northwest and the slew of ape-like creature encounters scattered across the rest of the United States. Green was certainly qualified to write about the subject. He was a successful journalist and newspaper writer living in British Columbia, Canada, along the Pacific coastline, where stories of upright, ape-like

creatures are plentiful. After becoming interested in the burgeoning quest for Bigfoot in 1957, he began interviewing witnesses and collecting newspaper accounts that would eventually make their way into his books.

During a trip to Texas in 1976 to see the one-hundred-and-seven-million-year-old fossilized dinosaur tracks in the Paluxy River (fifty miles south of Lake Worth), he and his friend, Dennis Gates, decided to make a detour to visit Sallie Ann Clarke. In *Sasquatch: The Apes Among Us*, Green explains:

I had seen a story about the Lake Worth monster but did not take it seriously, and had no intention of investigating it. Dennis and I went to the Fort Worth area solely to check on the tracks in limestone in the bed of the Paluxy River near Glen Rose. It was the quantity of clippings that tumbled out of the Star-Telegram's "Monster" file that persuaded us to devote an extra day to calling on Sallie Ann Clarke and looking around Lake Worth. I learned long ago that police explanations of reports like this are not necessarily correct, and I have no grounds for calling Mrs. Clarke a liar. I am also quite sure that she is not the type to "see" things because of hysteria. There is certainly independent evidence of hairy giants circulating in the northeast corner of Texas, and if that is so there is no reason why one should not have spent some time in the woods of the nature center at Lake Worth, or why it should not still be stopping off there from time to time.^[57]

As the 1970s rolled on with bellbottoms and bicentennial celebrations, Lake Worth itself grew in popularity. This meant there were more people around, but that didn't seem to stop the strange happenings. According to a man named Robert in a report filed with the Bigfoot Field Research Organization (BFRO), on the Friday before Christmas in 1976, he and two friends, Mike and Al, went to Greer Island to do some fishing. By the time they got there it was dark, so they parked their truck and got out their flashlights.

"We were talking in back of the truck watching the river running by and shining the flashlights," Robert recalled. "We were facing north and we hear this 'roar, scream, howl,' behind us. It was so loud that I ducked

forward, gritting my teeth. Mike grabbed my jacket and said, ‘What the hell is that?’”^[58]

The guys were trying to figure out what kind of animal could be making such a loud and angry sound when the roar/scream/howl shattered the cold night yet again.

“It was echoing, and it felt like the woods were shaking,” Robert continued. “It’s loud and long and sounds mad as all get out. You could almost hear it taking a breath before it howled.”

By now the men were too frightened to continue their evening of fishing. Al was already in the truck. As Robert and Mike got into the cab, they heard the chilling howl once again. Robert started the vehicle and raced out of the Fort Worth Nature Center as fast as the curvy road would allow. When they reached Highway 199—where John Reichart and his wife had stopped years earlier—they finally pulled the truck over to discuss what they had heard. The sound was like nothing Robert had ever heard before or since.

It’s hard to say whether Robert and his friends heard the vocalizations of an unknown creature since they did not see what was making the sound, but apparently others were still seeing the alleged creature around Lake Worth. According to Robert:

After I went back to school after the Christmas Holidays, I was telling my friends, and they told me of a man that was around named Dennis. I talked to him, and he said he saw it two times. The first time, six people in the car saw it standing with its arms over its head. Someone said ‘look at that dummy in the road,’ and as they got closer, it was panic in the car; three girls and three guys, all at the same time, seeing it. He said it was huge, massive. The headlights showed huge [pectoral] muscles and arms. He spun the car around and left. The next time he saw it, it was running through an area where the asphalt turned to dirt road. I knew where he was talking about. [He] thought it was heading to the woods. Then it turned and was after the car. They were all screaming as they left it in the dust.^[59]

The story is thirdhand but interesting nonetheless. If it were a hoax played on Dennis, then someone was surely committed to the cause since it had been years since the initial buzz of 1969.

While researching the case, I came across a woman by the name of Cynthia Dunston who told me of a possible Bigfoot encounter she had in 1982 near Eagle Mountain Lake only a few miles north of Lake Worth. She was young at the time and was visiting her grandparents, whose house was located on the lake. She spent many afternoons exploring the woods surrounding the home, and on this occasion she had followed an old cow path from their barn to nearby Ash Creek.

“I got about halfway down the path when I saw something,” she told me. “There was a dark shape in front of the fence at the end of the path.”

Cynthia, a rather experienced outdoorswoman for her age, felt there was no reason to be alarmed, so she kept walking. As she got closer, however, the shape moved, and she could see it more clearly. “Then I froze,” she recalled. “I knew exactly what it was.”

Standing before her was a hairy, man-like creature. “I remember that its hair was longish and a dark auburn color,” she told me. “It looked as tall as an average man but not freakishly tall.”

To her understanding, Bigfoot did not *eat* people, so she was not completely panicked as she observed the thing. “This was more like extreme apprehension and caution of a large animal when you don’t know what it is going to do,” she recalled. “This appeared to be a natural animal.”

Despite her faith in the creature’s benign eating habits, Cynthia turned and started back toward the barn. She didn’t want to run, thinking it might give chase, but hurried at a good pace nonetheless.

“When I was almost to the barn, I looked back,” she continued. “It had followed me but stopped past the halfway point where I had been standing before. As soon as I had the house in sight, I made a wild dash for the gate to the backyard. Safely inside the gate, I looked back toward the barn. There was nothing there.”

Dunston had pondered the encounter for many years, believing that something strange was inhabiting the area in those days. Perhaps more than one strange thing, accounting for the differences in descriptions, hair color, and other details. Oddly enough, during her many years of living around Lake Worth, Dunston heard a story that sounds very much like the experience Gary Woolf had one night while camping at Goat Island.

Dunston said that a young man had gone camping on Goat Island with a friend. “During the night, they heard screaming and other loud crashing noises but were too scared to look out of their tent,” she said. “The next morning, they found their kayak smashed up.”

The aggressive nature of whatever may have roamed Lake Worth in the 1970s is undoubtedly reflective of the “goatman” stories at large across the United States. The Pope Lick Monster with its deadly train game and the Maryland Goatman with its axe play on our fears of what may be lurking on the fringe of our own cities. And it’s got enough aspects to tie it firmly to alleged Bigfoot behavior and descriptions from Bluff Creek to Boggy Creek. It may also be a reflection of our own selves: a primitive peek into our primordial past. Or perhaps just a trickster of the human kind in animal guise.



*Monster Hunters at Lake Worth in 1969
(courtesy of the Fort Worth Nature Center archives)*

CHAPTER 11.

REVEALING RUMORS



In the years that followed, many speculated as to what really happened at Greer Island that summer. The police suspected a hoax, but with so many incidents, it was hard to pin it on a single person. According to Jim Marrs, who wrote the original article detailing the attack on John Reichart and his wife, police had heard a rumor that some teenage boys from Brewer High School in White Settlement (a small community near Lake Worth) were responsible for the monster frenzy.

“They had found an old gorilla suit and wore a clear plastic mask that gave the impression of glowing,” Marrs stated in a 1999 interview with the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. The kids supposedly agreed to retire their “monster” to avoid prosecution. “So nothing official ever came of it, and that leaves the Lake Worth Monster free to keep roaming through legend,” Marrs concluded.^[60]

Marrs cited kids at Brewer High, while others pinned it on students at Castleberry or North Side high schools. The rumors, however, were never substantiated or capitalized on. Sallie Ann Clarke offered a reward of \$5,000 if anyone could pass a polygraph test proving they were the “monster.” No one ever came forward.

Prior to his passing, I talked with Jim Marrs at an event we both attended in Texas. He told me he still believed the Lake Worth Monster was the product of pranksters. But if so, which ones? As I often find in these highly publicized monster cases, there are multiple people who claim credit for a grand hoax. The Lake Worth Monster case is no exception.

In 2005, a reporter at the *Star-Telegram* received a handwritten letter with no name and no forwarding address. The writer claimed to have used a homemade, tinfoil mask to scare “a truckload of girls.” The letter began: “One weekend, myself and two friends from North Side High School decided to go out to Lake Worth and scare people on the roads where there were always stories of monsters and creatures who would attack parkers.”

The writer said that when they were finished, they went to a Dairy Queen in Fort Worth. “I had a Coke float. The goatman had a parfait,” the letter continued. “The goatman turns 55 this summer and resides a peaceful life in the hills outside of Joshua.”^[61]

We have a clue that the Greer Island Goatman likes ice cream, however, the problem with an aluminum tinfoil mask and gorilla costume (which would have probably been black or brown at the time) is they do not match the white creature the majority of eyewitnesses reported. Still more claims try to account for this by alleging that the creature frenzy was inspired by a goatskin or carcass displayed on the hood of a car or thrown down from trees onto the vehicles of couples who were parked below. But that just doesn’t make sense either. If a pelt or carcass landed on the car, it would just lay there unmoving. It wouldn’t have tried to grab Mrs. Reichart or fight with her husband or try to pull Mr. Buchanan from his pickup—or stand for photos and run into the woods. And it wouldn’t leave tracks.

Fort Worth police investigator Dale Hinz offered yet another theory having to do with the New Liberty Mission Rehabilitation Center for alcoholics located near the lake. The center was often referred to as the “Goat Farm” because its residents raised goats as food for the animals at the zoo. He said one of the residents of the center went by the name Foots Fowler.

“Foots was strange looking, well over six feet tall with arms that hung down past his knee, a very narrow head and extremely large feet,” Hinz explained. “Because of his abnormally large feet, he picked up the moniker ‘Foots.’”^[62]

Hinz said: “Foots told other residents of the center how he would sneak off at night, covered with goat skins, and prowls Lake Worth’s parks, scaring people parked in cars.”

While Foots sounds like a unique individual, and perhaps he had access to a goat skin, there were no “goatman” sighting reports from the other parks at Lake Worth, nor does this sound convincing even if ole Foots had a narrow head and long arms. The big feet might account for a Bigfoot-like track, but not for the actual sightings.

To evaluate yet another claim, E. R. Bills, a reporter from *Fort Worth Magazine*, tracked down a man living near Lake Worth who was rumored to be responsible for the tire-throwing incident. When Bills visited his home, the man—who is only identified by his last name, Vinzens—confirmed that it was true. According to Vinzens, he and two other guys (who did not want their names to be made public) had gone to Greer Island on the night of July 11 to join the festivities and look for the monster. He said they eventually ended up on top of the bluff with some other curious monster seekers looking for a party.

“Vinzens insists that the hooting and hollering and decision to roll a tire down the bluff wall was never meant to frighten the crowd below or run them off,” Bills explains in a 2009 issue of *Fort Worth Magazine*. “It was just he and his buddies’ way of firing up the festivities. They had simply wanted to impress some girls, but instead they petrified the whole crowd. He says the rolled tire looked like a toss because there was a ‘bump’ toward the bottom of the bluff wall that served as a ramp and sent the tire airborne.”^[63]

Vinzens said that when the incident made the newspaper the following day, he and his friend decided to lay low. When asked about Jim Marrs’s statement that the police supposedly talked to some teens who were responsible for the creature’s antics, Vinzens said that neither he nor his friends were ever approached by the police about the July 11 incident. Vinzens said that “he, himself, had looked for a monster in the area but mostly in the “mud flats” region where a ghost and a gnome reportedly haunted passersby.” However, his searches did not turn up anything.

Vinzens's story seems truthful, yet he is not the only person to take credit for the tire toss. A woman named Jan Galloway told a writer at the *Domain of Horror* website that her brothers were responsible for all the "goatman" incidents.

"They tied ropes and grapevines off in the day time [sic] and at night my younger brother Jack Shelby [11 years old] wore my rabbit coat and they would fly across the hoods of the cars and barely touch the hoods," Galloway claimed. "One night my brother Billy Shelby [15 years old] decided to come across the ground on all fours like a monkey . . . he jumped on top of a car and scratched the windshield and made a Tarzan sound and jumped off."^[64]

Billy's prank supposedly sent the Reicharts to call police. Later, Galloway said, Billy put on cut-off shorts and a white t-shirt, then smeared a "black eye pencil" on his face, arms, and legs. After ascending the ridge at Greer Island, he and several boys used a "giant slingshot" to launch the tire across the pit while Billy beat his chest and made more Tarzan sounds.

A giant slingshot seems highly unlikely, as well as the assertion that any one person or small group of friends could have been responsible for so many incidents and sightings spanning across months and even years. Vinzens and his buddies may have pulled off the immaculate tire toss (one that I could not replicate when a film crew and I took a tire and rim to the spot and rolled it down the cliff—it only flew a short distance from the ridge, even with a bump to help it), but even if we mark this incident off the list, there are so many more to account for. And with so much hearsay, rumors, and ridiculous claims, it's hard to sift out the truth of the matter, be it a man or monster. The only certainty is that strange things were going on at Lake Worth, and there were witnesses who believed they saw something truly unexplainable. And who am I to argue?

Following the publication of my book, *Texas Bigfoot*, in which I discuss the history of Sasquatch phenomenon in my home state, I was contacted by an individual who had been inspired to share his own story. He had mostly kept the experience to himself, based on initial reactions of ridicule, but he no longer cares what people think of it. It was obvious in my book that he was not the only person in the vast Lone Star expanse to have seen what most people would deem impossible, and definitely not the only person to have seen something along the meandering path of the Trinity River.

“It was a Sunday morning like any other Sunday morning that I had my whole world shaken up,” Jeff Ridley, Jr. told me. “I was going to have a great day of fishing but what I got was, well, unimaginable.”

In the early hours of May 22, 1988, Jeff Ridley, Jr., parked his truck at the end of a dirt road near the banks of the Trinity River just north of Riverside. The area here is veined with an array of offshoots and inlets flowing into and out of the Trinity River before it opens into Lake Livingston. It’s like an outdoorsman’s paradise where the best of country life and modern amenities converge. Ridley was an avid fisherman and hunter, often splitting his time between the river and the vast woods of Sam Houston National Forest to the south.

On this morning, he decided to try his hand at reeling in some bass, so he grabbed the appropriate rod and tackle box and walked a short distance down to the water. The sun was just starting to light the woods with a hazy mix of clouds and sun. The birds seemed cheerful as they began their early morning calls.

“I got down to the bank where a small sandy spot kind of jutted out into the water,” Ridley continued. “I set my chair down there and started to set up my hook and bait when I heard a loud cracking sound from a patch of trees to my right. It sounded like something breaking or walking on a branch.”

Ridley paused to look but did not see anything, so he resumed his work. About the time he made his initial cast into the water, he heard what he thought was a low growl or grunt. It came from the same patch of shadowy trees. Ridley had never seen any large animals at the spot before, but figured perhaps a stray dog or something might have been living along the river.

“I wouldn’t say I was scared by the noise. I didn’t have a reason to be scared, but something just gave me a weird feeling,” he said. “That’s when I saw it.”

The fisherman reeled in his line and looked more closely at the wooded area. The light was still hazy, but it was enough to see part of the head, shoulder, and arm of some large, hairy animal standing behind two live oaks. Whatever it was, it was looking right at him.

“I was trying to figure out what it was,” Ridley explained. “I couldn’t see much of the face in the shadows, but I could tell it was tall and

probably standing up on two legs. Then it sort of disappeared from view. At that point I was really spooked.”

Ridley turned back to the river and thought a moment about what to do. He had gotten up early and come all the way to the river, so he didn’t want to immediately leave. But the strange sighting and feeling of being watched was not something he could ignore.

“I thought maybe a bear and then maybe a person, but it just didn’t look like either one,” Ridley told me, as I could hear an emotional tone starting to affect his voice. As he informed me from the outset of the interview, thinking about the encounter still makes him uneasy all these years later.

Ridley tried to put the situation out of his mind and resume fishing, so he cast the line back into the water with feeble results. “The bait kind of plopped into the water near the bank, so I had to reel it back in,” he continued. “As soon as I did, I turned again to see if whatever had been there before was back. That’s when my whole morning took another turn.”

The thing had returned, this time standing in front of the two trees. It stood at least seven feet tall and was covered in light brown hair from head to foot. It looked ape-like and stood on two legs somewhat hunching at the shoulders. It made a grunting sort of sound just as Ridley had heard a few minutes prior.

“The thing was not standing completely in the clear, but there was hardly any brush and no big trees between it and me,” Ridley said with increasing emotion. “It was just standing there looking at me. I got the feeling it was maybe curious, but then I thought it might come forward at any moment and try to attack me. I just didn’t know.”

The next few seconds were a blur as Ridley dropped his rod and turned to run, keeping his eyes on the thing the whole time. His movement caused the creature to grunt again as it showed its teeth. Ridley said his body felt frozen and he could not find the coordination to run or retreat. He thought about jumping into the water, thinking perhaps it couldn’t swim, but luckily, he didn’t have to. The thing turned and dashed into the brush, effortless in its movements. It was upright on two legs the entire time. Within seconds it was gone.

Ridley’s head pounded with a combination of fear and confusion as he fled from the riverbank leaving his gear where it lay. He didn’t know what he had just seen, but he didn’t ever want to see it again.

When asked to describe the features of the beast, Ridley told me: “It all happened so fast, I didn’t take in everything I probably would have if I wasn’t so scared. But I can say that it was definitely not a person or any kind of gorilla or anything even that’s not normally in the Texas woods. It was more like an ape with the hair and dark looking skin and a wide body. It had a low brow, a sloping forehead, and sort of a heavy jaw that jutted out. For some reason I noticed its hand and fingers. They looked dirty like it had been digging in mud. I didn’t see much of its back, it moved so fast.”

The experience still haunts Ridley today, and he even though he has continued to hunt and fish, he has never returned to that particular spot on the river.

“I don’t know what that was other than what people would call a Bigfoot,” he concluded. “But I guarantee it’s not something you want to see up close. It changed the way I look at the world, and no matter what people have said about my story, I know what I saw, and it wasn’t normal.”

As improbable as this encounter may seem, it’s hard to refute a witness with such conviction. Perhaps the concept of *normal* is not as simple as we might think.



Fun times swinging around Lake Worth in a flimsy disguise
Art by Jonathan Dodd

CHAPTER 12.

A WORTHWHILE LEGACY



Last year I was contacted by Garrett Graham, a member of the Texas Parks and Wildlife program production team. He had been asked to create a feature on the subject of Bigfoot for their PBS series. He was familiar with my work in the field of cryptid research and wanted me to play a feature role in the production. I would be interviewed about a few different topics related to the history of Bigfoot-like creatures in Texas, and that would include my hometown hairy thing, the Lake Worth Monster.

As a lifelong visitor and supporter of Texas State Parks, I readily agreed to help out. I rarely pass up an opportunity to share weird stories from our state or the chance to inspire young people to get out into nature, even if it's to "search for Bigfoot."

Graham first conducted a sit-down interview at my home, and then we met at Greer Island in the Fort Worth Nature Center to shoot some additional footage. We were joined by my one of my best friends and fellow

cryptid hunter, Jerry Hestand, who also provided his perspective on the subject. It was certainly a fitting location to be interviewed as we stood in front of the very patch of lake where the famed creature was said to have gone swimming after snatching some barbeque chicken from Charles Buchanan back in 1969.

As my stomach mused about the possibility of our own chicken for lunch, my mind returned to a time almost exactly ten years earlier when I had been standing on the same spot to film a segment for the television show, *Monsters and Mysteries in America*. I was featured on several episodes of the show, including a segment about the Lake Worth Monster, along with my friend and longtime Lake Worth researcher, Craig Woolheater, and Bill Morris, a guy who had been there during the legendary monster craze. *Monsters and Mysteries* spent three seasons covering notable creepy cases from around America, and the fact that they chose to cover our local Lake Worth legend was not lost on me. Even in 2014, some forty-five years since a “Fishy Man-Goat” terrified couples in the shadow of the Pit, the legacy and story of the monster was still in demand.

Television and parked cars haven’t been the creature’s only vehicles, either. Way back in 1975, a rendition of the Lake Worth Monster was already tantalizing audiences as it stomped across a stage at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth.^[65] The creature was part of a folk/rock opera written and produced by Johnny Simons, who went on to cofound Fort Worth’s nationally acclaimed Hip Pocket Theatre. The production, featuring a music score by Douglas Balentine, was not based on the monster’s story but rather the monster serves as the main character’s alter ego in a plot inspired by Simons’s childhood experiences while growing up on Watercress Drive near Lake Worth. After debuting at the Fort Worth Art Museum, the production was performed on stages at Texas Christian University (TCU), the Scott Theatre, the Hop (later the Aardvark), and the Speakeasy rock club located in Fort Worth. It also had a Hip Pocket Theatre run in 1989.^[66]

To celebrate and preserve the story for new generations, the Fort Worth Nature Center has held an event called the Lake Worth Monster Bash, which takes place every few years. The Bash features presentations on the monster’s history, vendors, children’s games, and even a tire-tossing contest. During the event, a costumed goatman strolls the grounds and greets the attendees, posing for photos whenever asked. Fortunately for

him, the throng of gun-wielding monster hunters of old have long since dispersed to live their lives beyond the shores of Lake Worth, some still believing that what they saw and experienced during that time was very real, while others have written it off as a silly combination of fun and hysteria conjured up by the minds of reckless youth.

But can we write everything off as simply as that? The hype was undoubtedly fueled with the help of unintentional participators and hucksters, but there are some elements that still reside in the unsolved file. Though I cannot interview the late John Reichart, I have spoken to his son Aric who grew up hearing his father's hair-raising story. Aric will be the first to admit he has no way to prove what his mother and father tangled with that night, but he will assure you that it wasn't a lifeless goatskin on the hood or a kid dressed in white underwear and eyeliner, or a costumed gorilla or rogue monkey. Whatever his father encountered in those monstrous moments stuck with him as a traumatic memory the rest of his life.

And what about the other people who claim they got a glimpse of a strange animal or were attacked by something? Even if we throw out the tire-tossing incident and acknowledge that some people probably made leaps in judgment or fell victim to shenanigans, there are just too many reports over a significant stretch of time to dismiss them all without consideration. The police may claim to know the true identity of the goatman, but their investigation was cursory at best. And they never divulged names. Sallie Ann Clarke was there nearly every day interviewing people, and she claims to have seen it for herself. Even after her book was published, she continued to visit Lake Worth in an attempt to prove the creature's existence. She must have felt the case was worthy enough to forge on. And my late friend Bill Morris, though he never saw the alleged creature, truly believed there was something out there worth pursuing like a grain of truth in what has become a Texas-sized legend.

The explanations of a bobcat or monkey might account for some aspects, but not the whole of the affair. People surely know the difference between those animals and something like a goatman or Bigfoot. Case in point: just ten years earlier a wild monkey *did* terrorize Lake Worth and was even referred to as the "Lake Worth Monster" in a news article! However, the witnesses did not construe it as anything more than a primate.

According to the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, the “mean-tempered monkey” had been seen with increasing frequency in the woods surrounding Lake Worth from June of 1959 through early fall.^[67] During this time, local residents reported that it had preyed on chickens, stolen eggs and fruit, and even sent a woman running and screaming when the twenty-five pound, four-foot primate jumped out at her. No one could figure out how the monkey got loose in the area, but they all agreed it had become a nuisance. To that end, Lake Worth wildlife officer O.D. (Dutch) Carroll attempted to capture the animal by tracking it through the brush, but his efforts were unsuccessful.

By late August, the menacing monkey began to frequent an establishment known as the Red Barn Boarding Kennel, owned by Jay D. Freeman, as it foraged for food scraps. At first the monkey seemed to be friendly with the kennel residents, even befriending a poodle named Ginger. But that eventually turned sour when the primate slashed the poor dog’s throat in a fight. Ginger survived, but the incident sealed the fate of the mean-spirited monkey. On September 5, when the primate returned to the kennel, Jay Freeman and his assistant Buck Hazelwood first attempted to trap the animal by luring it into the open using Ginger and a banana as bait. The monkey, however, seemed wary, “ready to run if he saw an inch of a gun barrel.” When it became aggressive and snarled, Freeman dispatched it with a shotgun.

“I didn’t want to shoot him,” Freeman explained. “But he could have carried off somebody’s baby. He was a wild one.”

The tale of the ill-fated Lake Worth Monkey is surely tragic, but the point here is that even when a four-foot rogue primate was running amok on the shores of the lake, nobody mistook it to be anything more than what it was. No horns, no scales, and no white fur.

Regardless of what may have been roaming the lake in 1969, that summer was one of those rare detours into the unknown where everybody seemed to enjoy the ride. We even have a postcard to show for the trip in the form of Allen Plaster’s famous photo. The photo may be a cliché of Bigfoot blurriness, and it is certainly inconclusive, but it stands as one of the earliest photographed images of an alleged Bigfoot creature ever taken. Even the famous Patterson-Gimlin film, depicting what many people believe is an authentic Bigfoot strolling across Bluff Creek in California, was only captured two years earlier on October 27, 1967. Not bad for an

entry from Texas and more than most mysterious monster cases can boast, especially ones dating back this many years.

I recently did a presentation on the history of the Lake Worth Monster at the public library in Lake Worth. The turnout was great and included a range of people of all ages from young to old. Among the attendees were several people who had actually gone to Greer Island in 1969 when the monster craze was in full force. They told me of the excitement they had when traversing the dark woods, hoping to see something for themselves. None had, but they did not discount the possibility that something strange was afoot there. The woods were plentiful, and the dark waters of the lake ebbed with whispers of monsters dating back many years. All these years later, they are still fascinated by the mystery that unfolded that summer like a page from Ripley's famous *Believe It or Not*.

Lake Worth is a very different place now than it was back in the sixties. The area around the lake has given way to considerable development. The only thing that remains is a three-hundred-acre nature preserve that surrounds Greer Island. That's still very wooded, but it's within a stone's throw of fast-food restaurants, shopping centers, and busy marina docks where throngs of people enjoy water sports. If there was a creature there, it was perhaps just passing through, flowing through a moment of time like the very waters of the Trinity River whose surplus supplies the lake.

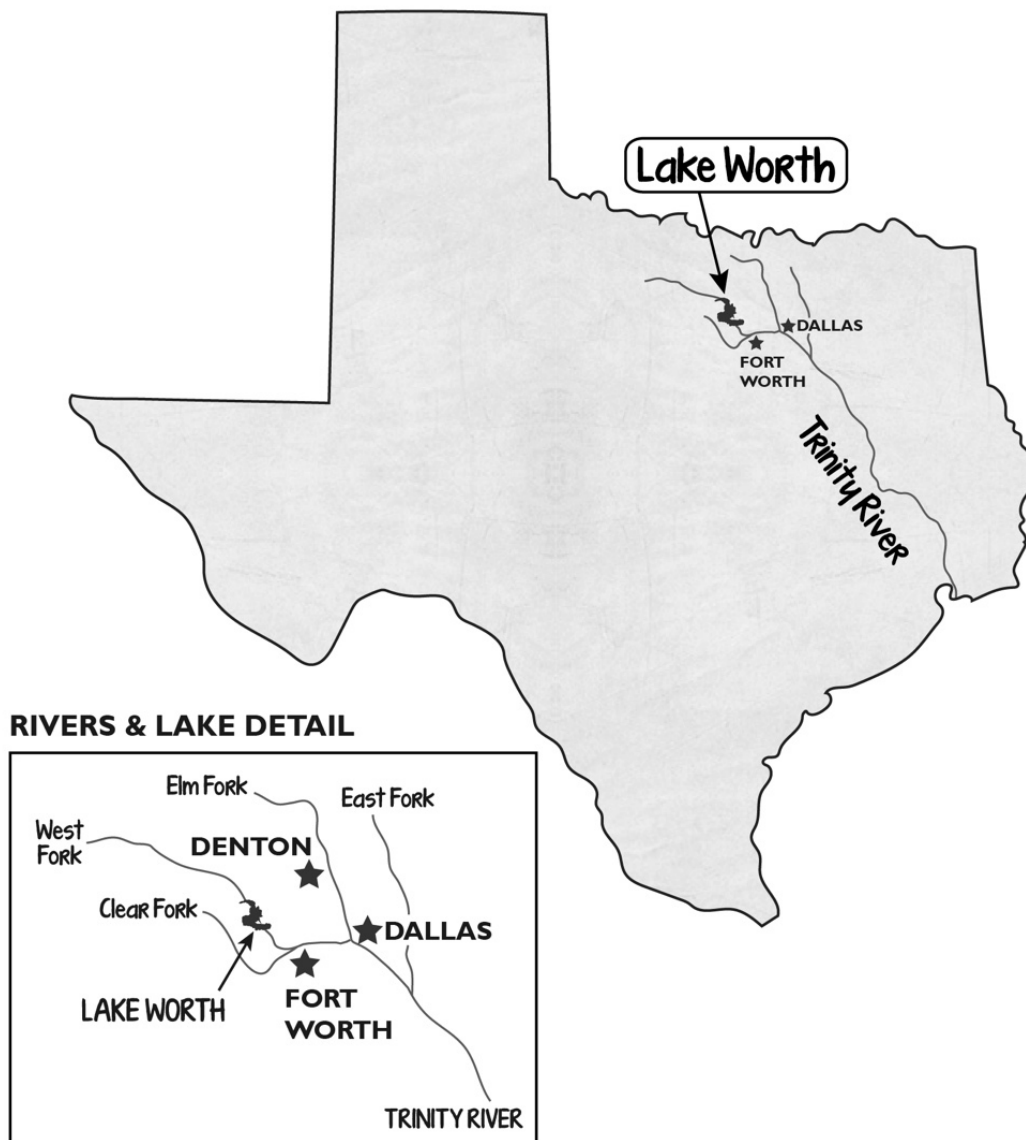
As the sun sets on the shores of Greer Island, the question still remains: What was the Lake Worth Monster? Was it a gruesome goat, an undocumented species of ape, a paranormal entity, a person (or persons) with brute strength and an assortment of costumes, or the ultimate embodiment of urban legend? It's a question that has no definitive answer, and probably never will, because any clues we may find at this point will forever be clouded by the passage of time and the filters of personal belief, which are so deeply ingrained in all of us.

It's possible that the Lake Worth Monster is, in reality, a little bit of everything. An extraordinary example of how stories transform into legend, an offbeat piece of history that reminds us of simpler days when people gathered in the outdoors without cellphones or video cameras to tell stories and seek adventure. It is the hope that there are still things in our world that we may not yet understand, a bit of mystery that compels us to keep

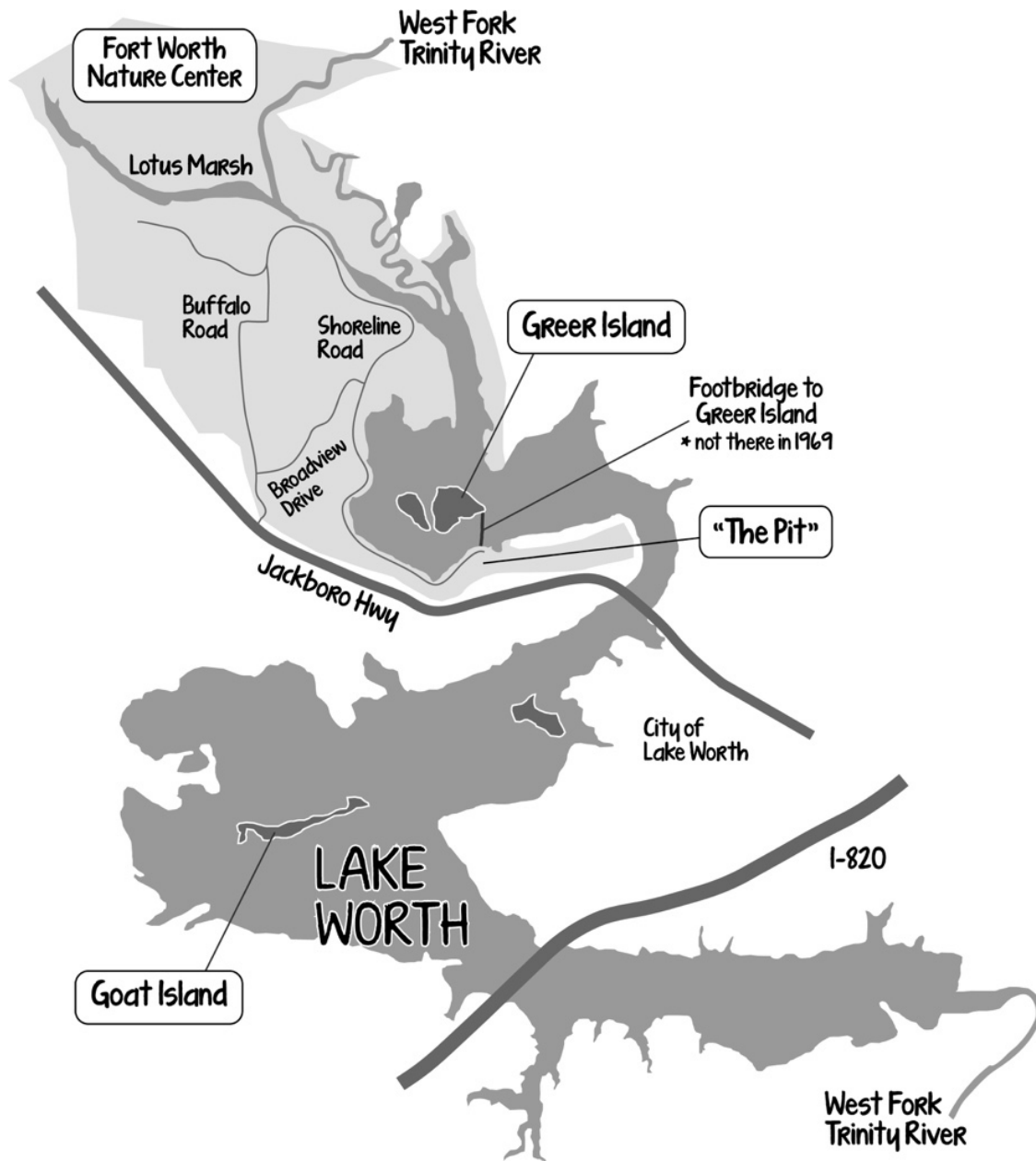
exploring the unknown. Or perhaps it truly is a monster whose very existence relies on our skepticism, disinformation, and the last vestiges of wilderness to remain hidden. For every person who says there are no such thing as monsters, there are others who believe they have seen a mysterious apeman, a lake serpent, a werewolf, an alien, a ghost, or some other strange form that defies rational explanation. And if we believe in monsters, are they not then real?

Appendix A.

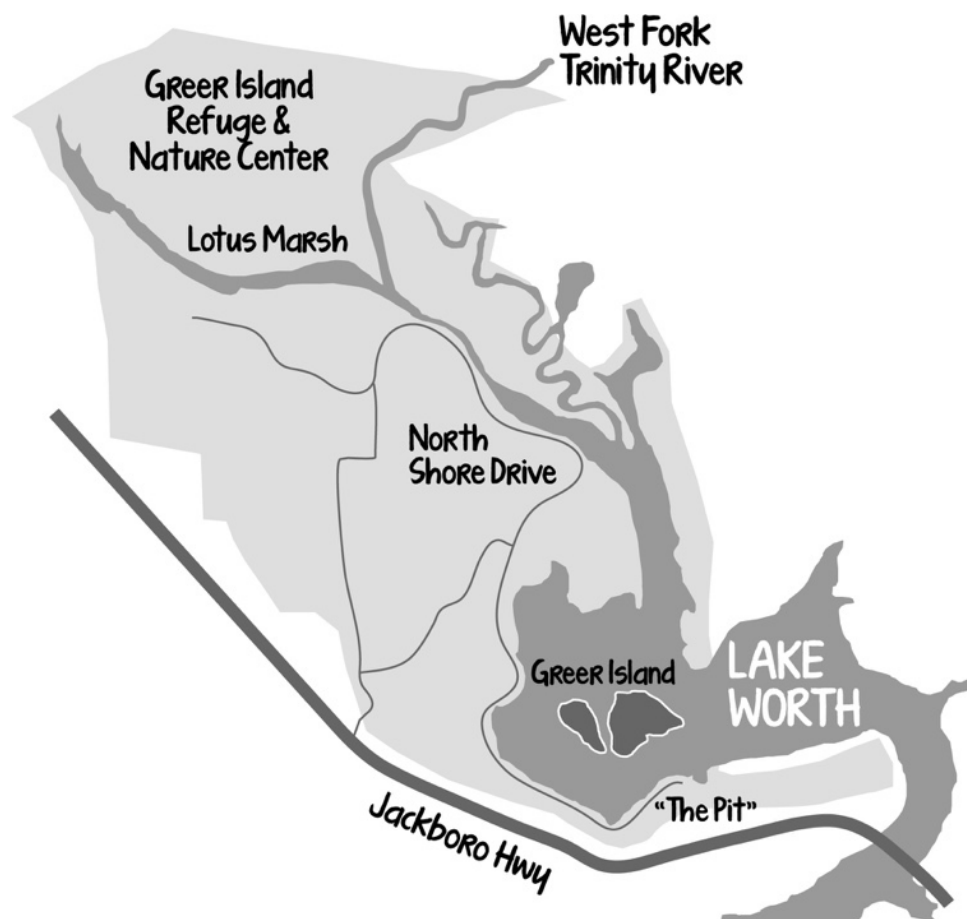
Maps



Texas map with Trinity River and Lake Worth locations



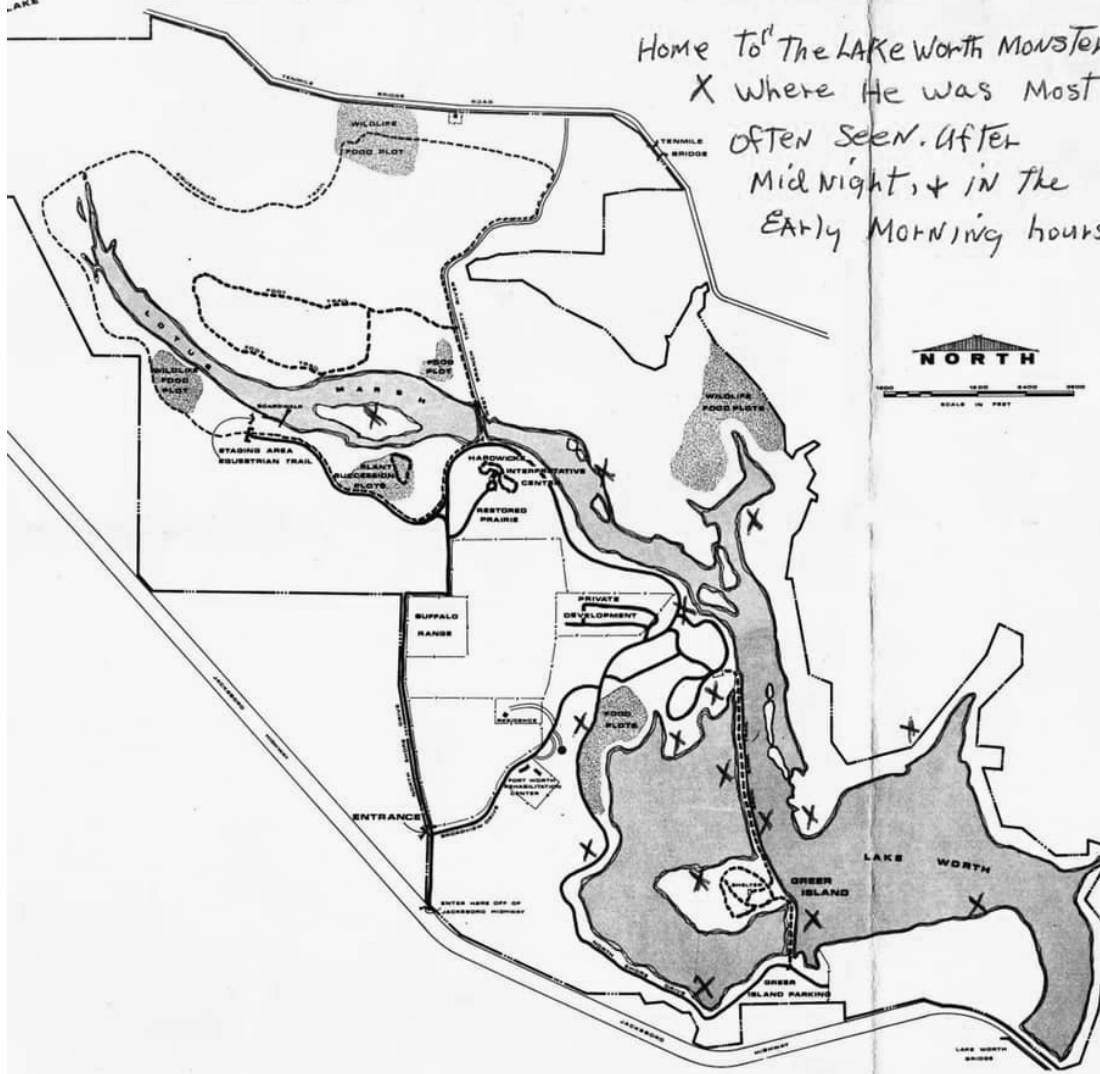
Lake Worth Map (current)



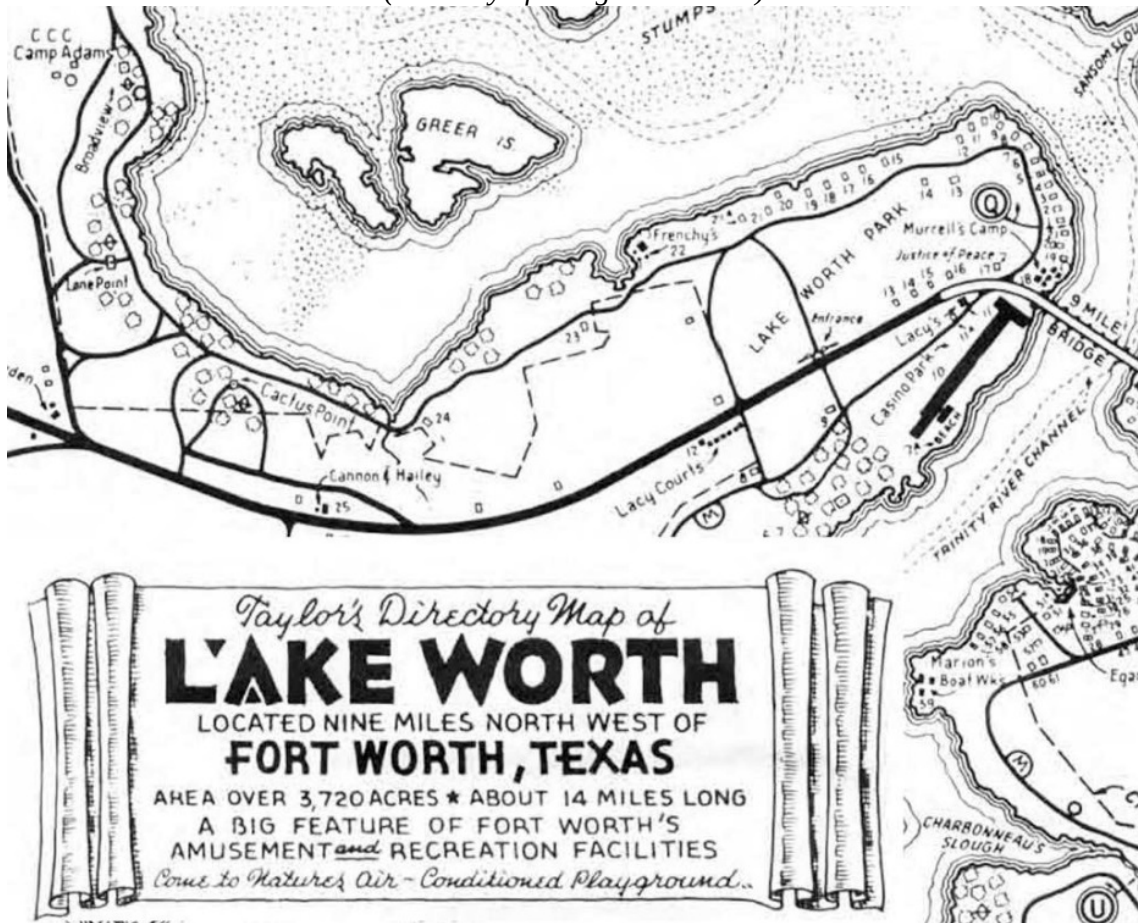
Lake Worth / Greer Island location detail (1969)

**FORT WORTH NATURE CENTER AND REFUGE
INCLUDES 3400 ACRES OF NATURAL AREA**

Home To The LAKE WORTH MONSTER
X Where He was Most
often seen. After
Mid Night, & in the
Early Morning hours



Map of Lake Worth Monster sightings given to Craig Woolheater from Sallie Ann Clarke
(Courtesy of Craig Woolheater)



Vintage Greer Island area map (courtesy of Craig Woolheater)

Appendix B.
News and Photo Archive

POLICE SUSPECT PRANKSTERS

Fishy Man-Goat Terrifies Couples Parked at Lake Worth

By JIM MARRS

Six terrified residents told police early today they were attacked by a thing they described as being half-man, half-goat and covered with fur and scales.

Four units of Fort Worth police and the residents searched in vain for the thing, which was reported seen at Lake Worth, near Greer Island.

The six residents were parked near the island.

* * *

"WE'VE HAD REPORTS about this thing for about two months," a police dispatcher said this morning, "but we've always laughed them off as pranks."

This time, however, police apparently believe the six were frightened by someone or something.

Police said John Reichart of 920 S. Henderson told this story:

* * *

REICHART, ALONG WITH his wife and two other couples, was parked at Lake Worth about midnight when someone or something

leaped from a nearby tree and landed on their car.

The thing was described as being covered with fur and scales and being "part man and part goat."

Reichart said the thing tried to grab his wife but he drove off before it could touch her.

* * *

RETURNING TO THE scene with police, Reichart pointed out where the attack took place, but no sign of the thing could be found.

Reichart showed officers an 18-inch scratch down the side of his car which he said the thing made with its claw-like hands.

"We did make a serious investigation," said patrolman James S. McGee, "because those people were really scared."

* * *

HOWEVER, MCGEE SAID the couples probably were the victims of pranksters, who either threw a dummy on the car or dressed someone in an ape costume.

"That's a dangerous way to pull a prank," added McGee. "Someone is liable to get themselves shot."

July 10, 1969

Fort Worth Star-Telegram

SATYR-DAY OUTING NEXT?

Police, Residents Observe But Can't Identify 'Monster'

BY JIM MARRS

It's been called the "Lake Worth Monster," a half-man, half-goat thing with fur and scales, a "manny-goat," and a satyr.

Police believe it is a prank.

A naturalist believe it is a bobcat.

Twenty or 30 residents don't know what it is, but do know it scared the bejabbers out of them.

* * *

THE "MONSTER" first made the headlines yesterday after a car-load of six residents reported a half-man,

half-goat with fur and scales jumped their car at Lake Worth near Greer Island.

The Lake Worth monster was reported to have struck again early today, and police are now getting worried that someone is going to get hurt.

"I'm not worried about the monster so much as all those people wandering around out there with guns," said Sgt. A. J. Hudson, who investigated today's reported sighting.

* * *

POLICE SAID yesterday they believe the "thing" may be someone in an ape cos-

tume, or someone throwing an animal hide at cars, as a prank.

If so, he is an athletic someone.

Witnesses today said the thing threw an automobile tire and wheel 500 feet.

A park naturalist says the thing may be a bobcat.

(Police said they had received reports before, but laughed them off.)

* * *

TODAY'S REPORTS be-
Turn to Witnesses on Page 2

July 11, 1969 (1)

Fort Worth Star-Telegram



A CRY, A LEAP, A HEAVE—The "Lake Worth Monster" last night is said to have uttered a "pitiful cry," leaped from a bluff (as shown by dotted line) and thrown a tire and wheel (from spot marked X to present position in picture). Jack Harris, left, of 5537

—Star-Telegram Photo by TONY RECORD

Terrace Trail and Ronny Armstrong of 2714 W. Lorraine said they witnessed these feats. Armstrong said he backed his car into a tree getting away. Shown also is Harris' 5-year-old daughter, Teressa Louise.

July 11, 1969 (2)

Fort Worth Star-Telegram

'Monster' Bobcat?

Helmuth Naumer of the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History believes that the "monster" sighted at cat.

Naumer said today that, according to Dick Pratt, the naturalist at Lake Worth Park, someone turned loose a pet bobcat in the park a while ago.

Naumer said the cat is quite large. He likes people and is accustomed to sitting on tree branches. He has jumped on several cars, scaring the occupants, but he is not considered dangerous.

"We were quite tickled at the speculation that the 'monster' might be a satyr," Naumer said (Some witnesses described the thing as half-man, half-goat).

"Satyrs are a Greek myth. It's rather humorous that one should turn up in Fort Worth. Also, the character of a satyr has always been described as gentle and kind. The god Pan was a satyr."

July 14, 1969

Fort Worth Star-Telegram

'Loch Worth' Monster Reportedly Furry, Scaly

There's the Loch Ness monster, and then there's the Lake Worth monster.

While people are still waiting for a glimpse of the fabled Scottish beast, six terrified persons told Fort Worth police early Thursday they had seen a Lake Worth monster.

They described the local beast as being half-man, half-goat and covered with fur and scales.

Police said John Reichart of 920 S. Henderson told them he and his wife and two other couples were parked at Lake Worth about midnight when the monster leaped from a tree onto their car.

Reichart said the "thing" tried to grab his wife but he drove away before it could touch her.

He returned to the scene, near Greer Island, with four units of police, but no sign of the monster could be found. Reichart showed police an 18-inch scratch down the side of his car which he said the critter made with its claw-like hands.

"We did make a serious in-

vestigation," said officer James S. McGee, "because those people were really scared."

A police dispatcher said there had been earlier reports of the thing "but we've always laughed them off as pranks."

McGee theorized the couples were probably victims of pranksters who either threw a dummy on the car or dressed someone in an ape costume.

"That's a dangerous way to pull a prank. Someone is liable to get themselves shot," he said.

1969

unknown source

A Lake Worth Gothic tale

Hairy horror strikes again

By JIM NEAL

The hairy horror of Lake Worth has put in its first autumn appearance, and its intended victim saved himself with a mighty weapon—a barbecued chicken.

That's the story of Charles Buchanan, an engineer who spent Friday night on the shores of Lake Worth, but who's now registered in the safe harbor of the Desert Inn Motel.

He said the hairy horror appeared at about 2 a.m. at a spot near Greer Island Nature Center—the area where the monster's been seen before.

"I was asleep in my sleeping bag in the bed of my pickup," Buchanan said. "I'd put out trotlines earlier. I woke up when my pickup tipped. Something was lifting it. At first I thought it was an earthquake."

Then, he said, a hair-covered face heaved itself over the side of the pickup, and two long, hairy arms grabbed Buchanan — sleeping bag and all—and hoisted him in the air, then dropped him.

Almost overpowered by the critter's stench, Buchanan said he did the only thing he could think of—he grabbed for the bar-

becued chicken he'd bought earlier and thrust it, sack and all, at the monster's head.

The monster, Buchanan said, took it in his mouth, and with guttural noises, loped off through the trees, splashed into the water and began swimming with powerful strokes toward Greer Island.

Buchanan said in its run through the trees, it toppled "several four-inch thick saplings."

Buchanan described the critter as about 7½ feet tall and with long arms and short, stubby, deformed fingers. Estimating its weight at "between 700 and 1000 pounds," he said it was covered with hair, face and all, and looked "like a cross between a human being and a gorilla or an ape."

He said he got into the cab of the pickup and left the scene in a hurry—but not before noticing at least one footprint. He said in general, it was shaped like that of a human foot—except it was 18 inches long, and showed the toes were extra long—about 2½ inches, he estimated.

"I've read about this thing before, several months ago," Buchanan told The Press. "But I'll tell you—this thing exists!"

November 9, 1969

Fort Worth Press

Greer Island beast 'Odyssey' star

Play to unveil writer's idea of monster

By CLAIRE EYRICH
He may be called the Monster of Lake Worth or the Ghost of Greer Island, this curious apparition seen at various times by "hundreds of people and reported in the Evening Star-Telegram of July 11, 1965, by Jim Marrs, in a story headlined "Police Residents Observe, but Cannot Identify Monster."

He has been called a satyr, a scaly fish-man, a hairy goat-man and a species of puma or bobcat. Sometimes he roars and sometimes he makes "pitiful" sounds. He is strong enough to leave claw-marks on automobiles of monster-watchers on the mud-flats of Lake Worth, some have said.

John Simons, who lives at the edge of the lake, has never seen the creature that supposedly inhabits the murky

B living

BRIDGE
FEATURES

Fort Worth
Star-Telegram
Mon. Morning
March 17, 1975

depths of the lake beyond his back yard — a serene landscape of post oak and tupelo and fringes of cattail rushes.

But for John Simons, a playwright of enormous creativity and imagination, the mere idea was enough. He is not mawkish about his monster, but he feels some sympathy for the lonely and isolated creature, whatever it may be, real or unreal, freak or apparition.

How he expresses his feeling will be a secret until his play about the monster, underscored throughout with

music by Doug Ballentine, is performed at 11 p.m. April 24, 25 and 26 in the Fort Worth Art Museum as "A Music Odyssey."

THE TWO-HOUR play includes uninterrupted music, dialogue and monologue and a half-dozen other media, film, slides, dancers, Pantomime, folksong, hard rock, soft rock and roll. Mark Walker has filmed Lake Worth scenery and abstracts that will be projected onto the white walls of the Solum of the museum. Film and music will "tie the idea together and create the mood" of the production — not in a collage, but in a poetic mood that will open up the walls of the museum to the lake scene," he said.

Simons and his wife, Dian, are both young, both creative and like living "at the lake." Dian, who got her master's of fine arts degree at TCU in 1971, is costume designer for Casa Manana Playhouse, conducts drama workshops for Human Potential Institute — and bakes her own bread.

Simons will get his master's degree this spring. A mime, a dancer and director, he plans to continue his career in Fort Worth as director for Casa Manana Playhouse. The couple have two youngsters, Lorca 1 and Lake, not yet 2.

"The monster is not a living person, like Lizzie Borden of Fall River Legend," but he is based on a tale that has been believed by a lot of people," Simons says.

In the folk-rock opera, he will be "not a literal picture," but definitely "something that should be saved, that should not be allowed to disintegrate into the lake mists, leaving the area poorer for its going."

THIS WEEK, Simons will be playing a whole gallery of characters in Casa Manana Playhouse's "Spoon River Anthology." He plays a middle-aged former Paris expatriate recalling his school days and the one teacher who fired his imagination, a country boy who gets into a fight over a girl and goes off to the



—Star-Telegram Photos by BOB DRADY

KITCHEN SCENE — Dian Simons is a cook "from scratch" who bakes her own bread and has a kitchen filled with useful household articles of several decades, from hand-carved wooden bowls to tall glass

jars filled with beans, which she never uses because they are arranged in ornamental patterns. The kitchen, to Johnny Simons, is the one room where he does not have a writing or art project going.

Civil War where he is killed, an elderly family doctor who has wrecked his career and brought down the wrath of the townspeople by performing an abortion on a simple-minded girl who had been raped as the result of a crude joke.

He plays Charles Fawcett, a smalltown bank depositor sent to jail by mistake when the bank fails, and Enoch

Dunlap, blustering politico of the 1914 vintage, and Penn-witt, an artist involved with a cross-eyed judge who does not want to appear cross-eyed in his portrait.

Then there is the Rev. Lemuel Wiley, brimstone evangelist, priding himself on preventing the divorce of Mr. and Mrs. Bliss, while Mrs.

Bliss suffers agonies of a grim life because of his meddling.

"Spoon River" will be performed each day this week at 10 a.m. Tickets are available for March 21, and a few are left for other days. The public is welcome at Casa Manana Playhouse performances, along with about 75,000 students each season.



MASK — Johnny Simons has created several versions of the Lake Worth monster in masks — but perhaps the most terrifying is a blank, smooth, pale yellow mask like those used in pantomime, a clown-face without expression.

March 17, 1975

Fort Worth Star-Telegram

MONSTER

STILL PIC OF MONSTER

PIC

NAUMER
SLIDE ~~XXXXXX~~

~~mo~~ And finally, the weird creature that terrified six residents early this morning near Greer Island, North of Fort Worth, may have been identified. According to Ft Worth police, a man and his wife and two other couples were parked in a car at lake worth around midnight, when, according to car's occupants, they were attacked by something they described as half-man, half-goat, and covered with fur and ~~XXXXXX~~ scales. They said the thing dropped from a tree to the top of their car, , leaving an 18 inch scratch on the vehicle, before the driver sped, from the scene and notified police. Four police units went to the lake, but found nothing, They did say they had received similar complaints in the past. (NOW-mer) At any rate, Helmuth Naumer, director of the Ft Worth Museum of science and history, told WBAP news tonight that the thing, in his opinion, is a bob-cat. (MORE)

WBAP News Report Script - July 10, 1969

(courtesy of The Portal to Texas History, University of North Texas Special Collections)

jb MONSTER F.S. 158

This is the latest progress report on the Lake Worth ~~monster~~ monster, a half-man half-goat, seven feet tall with scales and fur who roams around Greer Island,, North of Fort Worth, and scares the daylight out of people. According to witnesses, the monster ripped the wheel from a pickup truck early this morning and hurled it at a group of campers, who were sitting around a campfire. The interesting part of the monster's latest feat is the distance of the tire toss. Estimates range from 50 feet ~~XX~~ to Five hundred yards. If the monster was any stronger, the tire might have gone right into orbit.

FISHERMAN 67 year old Edgar Richardson went fishing at Lake ~~Worth~~ Worth ~~XXXX~~ today and he told our monster reporter that he had never seen or heard about the creature. "Besides, he said, "the fishing is too good to leave on account of any monster."

WBAP News Report Script - July 11, 1969

(courtesy of The Portal to Texas History, University of North Texas Special Collections)

BENBROOK MONSTER SIGHTED ... de La Garza/Tamayo ... 200' Nat. sof ...

TOTALTIME: _____

39

Mark Frick said he was sitting at a picnic bench sipping a soda and listening to his radio when he heard a loud growling noise near the lake shore. Frick said it scared him, and that he ran to his car and turned his headlights in the direction of the noise. According to Frick, an animal resembling a 6 to 7-foot black bear crawled from the shore thirty feet away, and disappeared in the brush. Frick gave chase but found nothing, and later reported the incident to the Benbrook Police Department. ~~Frick definitely believes he saw something.~~ ~~Later.~~ This afternoon, Lake Benbrook appeared normal, with its usual attendance of lake enthusiasts. 34 One enthusiast, Jack Hawkins of Ft. Worth, said he ~~was~~ believes Frick saw a monster.

TAKE SOF OF HAWKINS HERE: RUNS: _____

13

Benbrook police today said they have no evidence of any monster, and no leads into the case. But Frick says he will return with a camera to prove that he did see something at Lake Benbrook

BT- C5N

WBAP News Report Script - March 9, 1973

(courtesy of The Portal to Texas History, University of North Texas Special Collections)



“The Pit” area near Greer Island in 1969

*(courtesy of The Portal to Texas History,
University of North Texas Special Collections)*



“The Pit” area near Greer Island in 1969

(courtesy of the Fort Worth Nature Center archives)



*“The Pit” area near Greer Island in 2014
(photo by the author)*



*“The Pit” area near Greer Island in 2024
(photo by the author)*



The actual tire thrown by “the monster” on July 11, 1969

*(courtesy of The Portal to Texas History,
University of North Texas Special Collections)*



*A view of Greer Island from Shoreline Road in 2024
(photo by the author)*



A marsh area at Lake Worth (photo by the author)



North Shore Drive in 1969

*(courtesy of The Portal to Texas History,
University of North Texas Special Collections)*



Shoreline Road in 2024 (formerly North Shore Drive) (photo by the author)

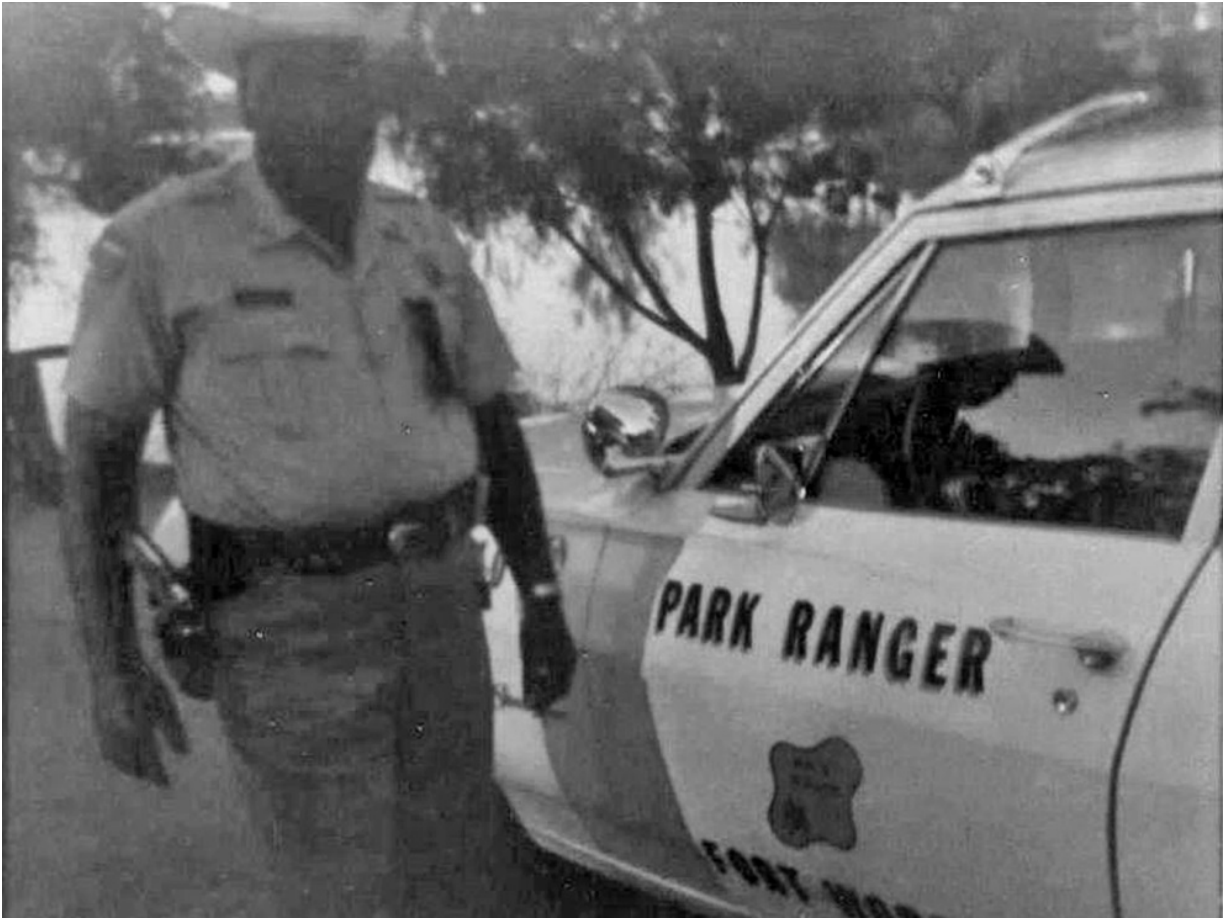


Greer Island Refuge sign in 1969

*(courtesy of The Portal to Texas History,
University of North Texas Special Collections)*



Greer Island trail sign in 2024
(photo by the author)



Fort Worth Park Ranger investigating the monster situation in 1969

(courtesy of the Fort Worth Nature Center archives)



Sallie Ann Clarke and others examining a fence broken by “the monster”

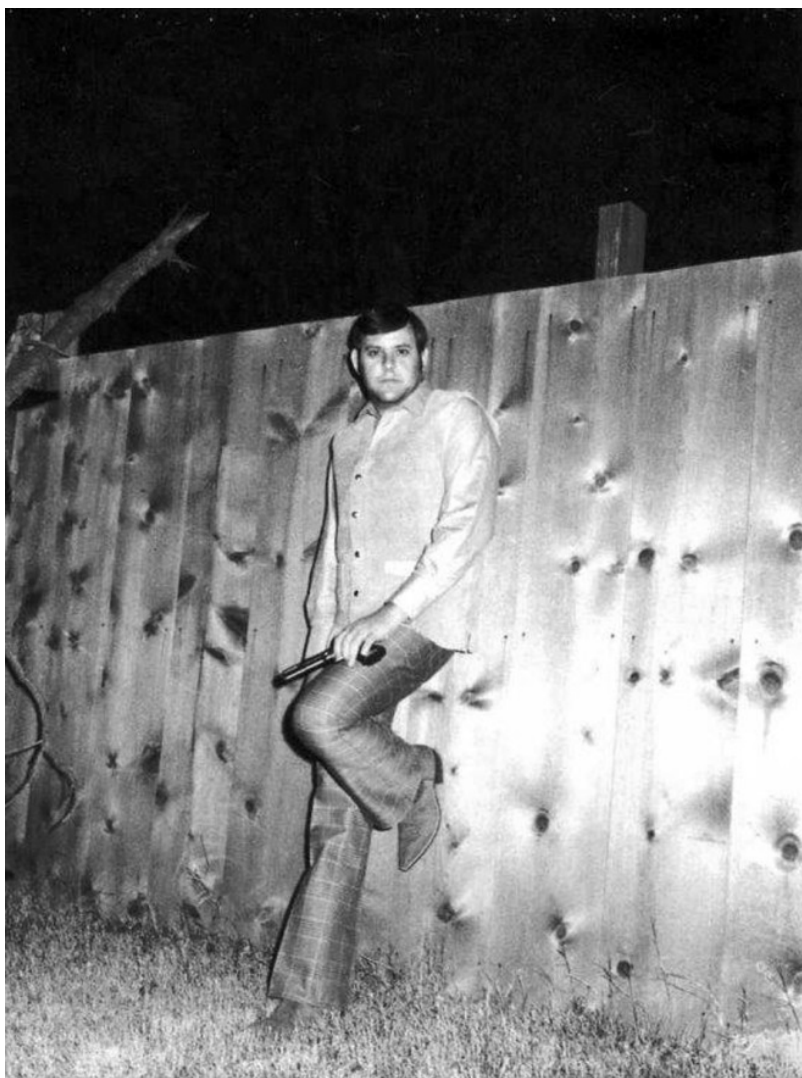
(courtesy of the Fort Worth Nature Center archives)



The Trinity River in North Texas (photo by the author)



Bobby Brooks standing next to the fence where he took a photo of something (courtesy of the Fort Worth Nature Center archives)



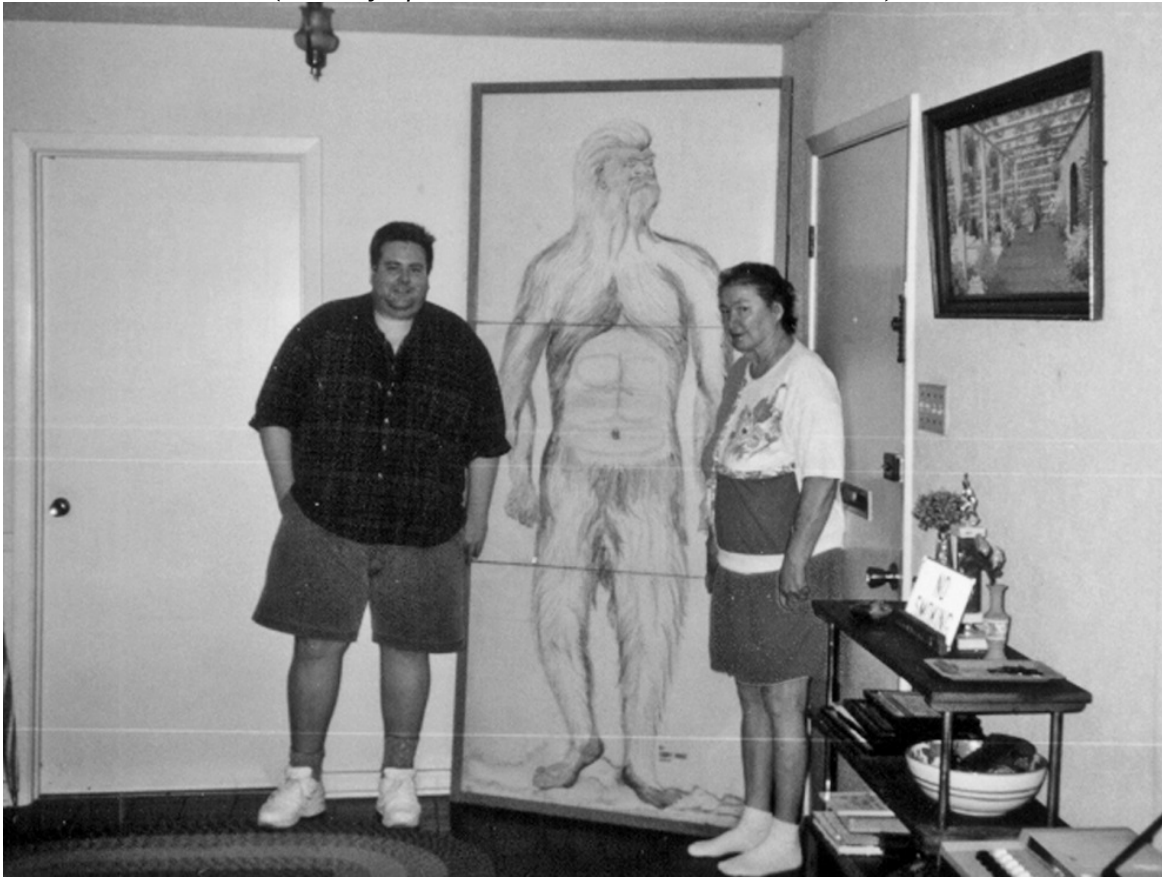
Allen Plaster in 1969

(courtesy of the Fort Worth Nature Center archives)

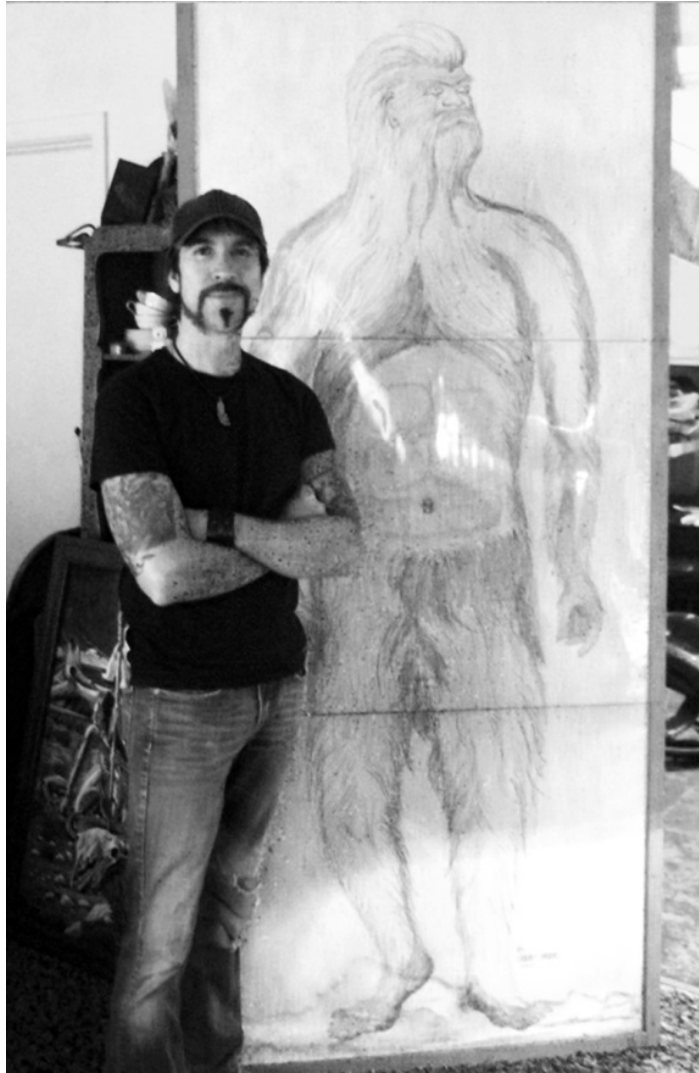


Sallie Ann Clarke with author John Green in 1976

(courtesy of the Fort Worth Nature Center archives)



Sallie Ann Clark with Craig Woolheater in 1999



(courtesy of Craig Woolheater)

The author with Bobby Brooks's drawing at Sallie Ann Clarke's home (photo by Tona Naranjo)



The Goatman at the Lake Worth Monster Bash (photo by Sean Whitley)



Monster toss game at the Lake Worth Monster Bash (photo by Sean Whitley)



Monster pin-the-tail game at the Lake Worth Monster Bash (photo by Sean Whitley)



The Lake Worth Monster mural at Lake Worth Park 3501 Roberts Cut Off Road, Fort Worth, Texas (photo by Craig Woolheater)



*Joe Pack pictured with a sculpture that he carved as a representation of the Lake Worth monster
in July 1969*

*(courtesy of Fort Worth Star-Telegram Collection, Special Collections,
The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries)*



*The author at the Lake Worth Monster Bash in 2013
(photo by Tom Shirley)*



Collage drawing by Bobby Brooks (from the collection of Craig Woolheater)

Appendix C.

Interview with Sallie Ann Clarke

The following interview with Sallie Ann Clarke, author of *The Lake Worth Monster of Greer Island, Fort Worth, Texas*, has been transcribed from an audio recording. The interview was conducted by Sean Whitley as part of his documentary film, *Southern Fried Bigfoot*. (During the interview, Mrs. Clarke asked that she not be filmed or photographed, so there is no video archive.)

How did you start researching the Lake Worth Monster, and how did that research make it into your semifictional book?

I read an article in the newspaper when I come in from work one morning about him. Well, it was kind of gibberish. They messed it up, but I thought that something sounds wrong the way they messed it up, and right that something happened. I'm just going to go out there and see, and I went out there that night and there were so many people; you just didn't know where to go. And I drove around, but didn't think a whole lot about it, you know, and was curious. There's so many people out here, there was something out here, and I heard a man say that it was a rag, and I heard a man say it was a goat skin, and I heard a man say it was a two-legged thing . . . it had two legs like a goat, and all this, and I thought uh-uh, I'm not going to come back. And then the next day, it was in the paper again, and I read where it threw something on somebody's car, and I thought well, I'll go see. I'll go out there again . . . quite a little ways to Lake Worth, and I went over there again, and there was still the same thing, only this time I took my camera and I thought, well, maybe I'll take someone's picture, and they were so serious, these people that were telling me this stuff, but the ones that just come up and start babbling, I didn't make theirs [photo]; I didn't believe them. And first I got four people, three guys and a girl, I believe it was, and they were telling me that it was . . . walked across the road just right close to them, and how its back was kind of stooped, and I looked at them and I said to that girl "You know you shouldn't lie about anything like that

because there's people out here who are going to get hurt." She said, "I'm not lying." She said "You don't have to believe it if you don't want to. I don't care." And I did believe her. For some reason, I believed her, but still I think ahhhh . . . it's too much monster here, and I went around and I saw a lot of people, I talked to several dozen, and made a picture with them, made with the little camera I had, made their picture, and then I came home, and just before I came home at twelve o'clock, somebody said "Well, you need to stay 'til after two o'clock, because that's when it comes." Well, that was the fourth day. I went back out there, and somebody had seen him, but I didn't see it, and then I just let them talk, finished my book, that's how fast I wrote it.

How long did it take to produce your book?

I had a girl come over here and type it in one night. I wrote it in three days. I wrote it and typed it up and had it out in a week. I wrote it in a hurry and printed it and let a guy put horns on it, they did everything to it. And I said, "Boy, I don't know." Then I carried it down to a lady that printed books where you make cookbooks. She printed it for me, and she got a kick out of it. Everybody else did. And then when it came out, I told them "Well, as soon as it gets out, I'm going to sell them to whoever wants to buy them." And I sold them things . . . I couldn't even turn loose of them. They believed it, though, and four times I state in the book that I had not seen the animal; that's my imagination, and the people would say, "Oh, you remember where you said this and you said that?" And I said, "Well, you people aren't listening. You're not reading, you're not even listening," and I went on, let them do what they wanted to do. I autographed a bunch of books, got tired of it, went to Australia, and had a good time, fooled around with a little money, and I said, "Well, I don't know. I think I'll go out there and look for it. It might be out there."

How many people did you interview for your research of the Monster?

Oh, God. Several hundred. There's no way of even telling. There was just lots of them, like the first day I went out there when they said they saw him . . . a car, when I stopped, there was a car, and there was four people that got out of it, and behind it came up a whole bunch more people walking, and then a whole bunch over here, I'd say about ten to fifteen at a time, and the first night I was out there, I probably saw three hundred people.

Were you skeptical when you first started investigating?

Until I saw it, I kind of wondered, you know? Wondered the first day. I just kind of grinned. And the second day I laughed, and the third day, I grinned again, and the fourth day I was wondering that why in the world is those people say that they saw that thing for when there's that many people and they didn't see anything?

How did you begin searching for the Lake Worth Monster after the publication of your book, and tell us about your first sighting of the monster?

So, the first night I went out after that, well, I heard that he'd been seen over at this one place. I went over there and find some tracks, a track down there. "Was that him?" I wondered, and I kept looking. I went down by the lake where I found the track—the big track—by the lake, and I made a plaster of paris of it, and then I wanted to see him, you know. And then a friend of mine, only he was drinking beer, and he drank so much he went to sleep. He didn't see him; I did. Sat in the back of a cab, uh, camper, you know, with a shell? Sat back in the back of the camper, could see through the screen door. I put a metal plate with some shrimp in it on the back of the camper, and that thing come up and stood there, and carried off the plate. I watched it. Boy, I mean, that thing scared the devil out of me. That was the first time I saw it. I didn't have a camera—I don't know why. I was looking for him; well I found him.

How many times did you see the monster?

I saw him five times, but one time was two times in one night.

Did you ever hear the monster make any sounds?

He'd kind of grunt, "oh grahhh ruhkh," a weird kind of grunting throughout; weird noises.

Tell us about the reported photo (not the Allen Plaster one) of the Lake Worth Monster and your second sighting.

So after that, I decided to try to find him again, make his picture this time, and I went around . . . the next time I saw him was where this boy made this picture, right there. He made this one right before you get up to the road, this road went this way, and then come out this way. It's kind of a Y like this [hand gesture]. I saw him right about just where he did . . . just about

the same place, so I figured that he had made a trail the way he went. We went up this from the little river where we saw him up on the hill and found some berries up there and found a place where he had used the bathroom a number of times. It had berry seed in it, had shrimp hulls in it, and stuff all in it. And we looked at that and then we went down from that hill, from where we were, and went down the fence and to a ditch. There was a big gully, like they'd thrown garbage or something in there, and we went down there, and by this time, there was a bunch of people [who] saw it and wanted to get in on it, and the man that made this picture here, he wanted to get in on it, and he had . . . big camera, a gun, and he left them both. He left 'em both in the camp when we started to follow him; he left both the gun and the camera. But we saw him and he kept saying "You See Him? You See Him? You See Him?" He was scared. That thing might have hurt you. And he might not have—I don't know, but he just stuck his hands out at us and, or not at us, but put his hands out over his eyes and stuck his hands out and we left him. We went back down there in the hole where we was, and after a while, we heard him coming around, we heard something upstairs coming around the hole. It was a big hole, around to the cars and the women, who was my secretary and another girl who was with her, they were sitting in my car, and then another two cars was behind mine and they blew the car horn and we saw him, when they had the lights on, run past into a barbed wire fence. He broke one wire in the fence and went off into the lake water. And we got all excited because here we'd seen him, but nobody did anything about it. We took a pot that time . . . how we got him to come, we took a pot and put a roast in it and cooked it for him so he could smell it, and that's why he come, I guess.

Tell us about your third and fourth sightings.

I went out there one time by myself. I was riding out there just riding real slow. There was a man and a woman and a little girl fishing, and right by where they was fishing was a strip of land and the water was on both sides, well, that thing was standing right there looking at them. It was moonlight, you could see him, and I said "What is that? Is that that Thing?" And I said to that man, "Do you know that Monster's standing over there watching y'all?" And he looked and he saw him, and he said, "My God," got the baby and their fishhooks and got in their car and they zoomed. That time was three, and the next time was out with [unintelligible], but one time was on

two times on one night, then we . . . we was getting the equipment all together, he rented a place at the zoo to put him. He said, "Don't tell nobody, 'cause we won't go out there when nobody's out there because they chase him off." And so a bunch of us went out, and if they'd known he rented a place at the zoo, they'd laugh sure as heck, they'd laugh at him. Well everybody, we went all out, but we could never get him, then they told us that we couldn't do anything else because they were going to put a fence around it, and they closed the whole thing off now. It's all closed off, closed it off about three years. And we went out there then, and I went in there, been in there since it's closed off, but not at night because you can't go in there at night, so whatever happened to him, I don't know.

Based on your sightings, what did the Monster look like?

It was just a big, tall white thing. See that picture's white, kind of whitish looking [referring to Allen Plaster's photo], and he was pretty tall, and his face was flat. I didn't see ears, couldn't see his ears, and his hands, he moved his hands around. His hands looked kind of short, kind of nubby, short hands, but they were down along right, they were past his waist way down, and he always looks at us like he wondered who we were, what we was doing out there when we saw him. We looked and wondered about him; well, he was wondering about us, and but it made no effort to hurt us, and way before that, we heard everybody had been hurt out there. There was a girl killed that was running from him. They hit a chug-hole in a ditch and killed a girl, somebody did. And there was a man with a little girl . . . the thing, they went out there after a movie one night and they went fishing and they had some stuff to make sandwiches. The little girl was carrying a loaf of bread, and it took the bread away from her and broke her arm. Then they said I had somebody do it and he was chasing some cows out there, there was some little cows out there, and he was chasing the cows and they said I was chasing the cows about two or three o'clock in the morning, and I just laughed it all off. I said "Well, it's not that. It's an animal." I can't say what kind it is, because I don't know, but I know it was a big one. It measured eight foot, I mean seven foot and eight inches up by right there on that tree where it was.

Do you think that the Monster was some sort of ape or gorilla?

I don't really know. It didn't have a nose that stuck out. It had a flat face, flat like that [hand gesture]. I tried to think of what could he be one night

and I laid in there and thought and thought, and I just could not. Whether he's a gorilla, or an ape, or just . . . it just was a big animal.

Do you consider the Lake Worth Monster to be what others call a Bigfoot or Sasquatch?

I think it's the same thing. I believe it is because of the size of its foot.

How big were the footprints that you found?

They were sixteen inches long and five and a half inches wide.

Tell us about Allen Plaster's photo of the Lake Worth Monster.

This man that made the picture was named Allen Plaster and he was a businessman. He had bought one of my books and read it and took the book and his camera and two friends—a lady and her husband. They went out there and just as . . . he crossed the road in front of him. When he saw it coming across the road, he stopped his car and grabbed his camera, but he [the subject in the photo] got down in the ditch before he [Plaster] made his picture, and then he came and brought the picture to me, and they were taking them. Everybody was taking him, the man, he lost . . . I think he had three, the Sheriff. This one here, when the guy gave the picture to me, well, I told him I just sent it off so they couldn't get it, and I didn't. I still had it, but then I told them I sent it off, but that's the tale of the picture. I wish we could have gotten one of him [the monster] looking at us, but we couldn't 'cause we just couldn't, but you can see that's him for sure, and here's where he broke the fence in where Bobby's standing there [pointing to a photo]. You see this fence, he broke it down over there.

What did Allen Plaster want to do with the monster?

But this Plaster, he wasn't wanting to kill him, he was wanting to put him in a zoo, and he had a place at the zoo to put him, too.

Can you comment on the rumor that high school students were behind a monster hoax?

Kids were telling police they did it and everything. I put up a five-thousand-dollar reward for any person, any person that would take a polygraph test and let me get the operator. Didn't get a call. That proves something to me, that they were just lying, because, you know, out of curiosity . . . somebody's going to try to . . . but they couldn't sneak it off on a polygraph.

Comment on the Charles Buchanan story. The guy who claimed he was dragged out of his pickup by the monster.

He was an engineer. He had just gotten transferred from some place to GD [General Dynamics]. And he came here and he went out, went out to the lake and was going to spend the night out there; he was going to fish that night and the next day, he was going to hunt for an apartment. And he went out there and bought him a barbecue chicken, and he went out there, and he said it was about two or three o'clock, he said his truck started shaking. He said he was about half awake and this thing just dragged him out of the truck and threw him on the floor. He said he had the chicken in the sleeping bag with him and he threw that chicken at him, and he [the monster] got the chicken and left him.

Did you find a lot of skeptical people wanting to talk to you about the monster?

For up to four years, there was somebody wanting to talk to me every damn week. I mean every week they was wanting to talk and laugh, and finally I got tired of that, you know, and I just shut the door to it.

What do you think of the people who were wanting to kill and study the monster?

I wished we would have caught him. I think it would have been fun to have him studied. Kill him—all them people wanted to shoot him. I didn't see that. I don't think any animal needs shot, but they were all wanting to kill him, boy, everybody, and they had guns, clubs, knives out there at the lake.

Do you think people will still be talking about the Lake Worth Monster in thirty years?

Well, they've talked about him and wrote about him since the 1840s, so yes, I think they'll still be going . . . going on about this thing when I'm dead and gone.

(And she was right! – Lyle)



*Sallie Ann Clarke holding a copy of her book at Lake Worth in 1989
(courtesy of Fort Worth Star-Telegram Collection, Special Collections,
The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries)*

Appendix D.

Memoir by Bobby Brooks

During my research into the Lake Worth Monster case, I had the pleasure of getting to know Bobby Brooks, who was not only there during the original monster frenzy, but he drew the cover illustration for Sallie Ann Clarke's classic book. Brooks is a multit talented guy who has dabbled in illustration, graphic design, chainsaw carving, and writing. He's written quite a few self-published books over the years, including a fictional work titled *The Lake Worth Monster: Telling His Side of the Story*. In the book, Brooks imagines what the monster itself would say about his story, if it could write.

Several years ago, Brooks sat down to write a short memoir that recounts his participation in the Lake Worth Monster story. This nonfiction, factual account has never been published, so I asked if he would allow me the honor to include it here. The following is Bobby Brooks's own words.



What, You Don't Believe in the Lake Worth Monster?

Don't feel too bad. Lots of people can't grasp the notion that something like a Bigfoot is alive and well and living among us. Truth is, I believe that with so many sightings, there has got to be some truth to the

story. And when you have seen something yourself, well, you're now a believer. So here I will pass on a little background information and tell you just what I know about the Lake Worth Monster, or the "Goat Man" as some call it.

It was during the summer of 1969 that I first met Sallie Ann Clarke. I had heard on the news about all the sightings at the lake, so like all the rest I went to see for myself. When I got there, I naturally wanted to know what was going on, and I hoped to ask a few questions to someone who had seen the monster. I was in luck, as I saw several people in a group talking to a lady with a tape player recording their every word.

I joined the group so I could hear what was being said. I heard about the tire being thrown, the tree branch being broken by the thing, and on and on. And so that's when I met Sallie Ann Clarke for the first time. I stood there listening to all the accounts of recent events she was recording, and when she was finished, I asked her why she was doing all the interviews. She told me she was a writer and hoped to write a book about the sightings. She was doing all the research she could while the sightings were still fresh in everyone's mind. She also wanted to know if she wrote the book, would all these people read it? She was happy to note that if everyone who said that they would read it bought one copy, she could sell quite a few.

I normally would have gone on my way and she on hers, but fate prevailed. She was getting ready to leave, and her car wouldn't start. She thought the battery had run down, and she asked if anyone had jumper cables. As luck would have it I had a set, so I jump-started her car and mentioned that I was a mechanic and if she needed any work done, she could call me. I gave her my number and she gave me one of her cards with her number on it, and we parted ways.

About a week later I got a call from her asking if I would come see what was wrong with her car. "The battery keeps running down every day," she said. I told her it was either a bad battery or her alternator was bad. She gave me her address and I went over to see what the problem was. It turned out to be the alternator. I took the old one out and put a new one in, which solved the problem.

While working on the car I asked how her research was coming along, and she said it was going great. She was looking for someone to do art for the cover of her book, and that's when I mentioned to her that I had been drawing and painting since I was in grade school. She asked if I

wanted to draft something up for her, and said if she liked it, she would use it for her book.

I drafted several renditions of what I thought the Lake Worth Monster might look like and gave them to Sallie Ann. (She said I could call her “Sallie Ann” now that we were friends.) She chose the one on the cover of her book, *The Lake Worth Monster of Greer Island, Fort Worth, Texas*. Personally, I would have chosen one of the other drafts I gave her that I thought was better, but it was her book, and she was the boss. I didn’t say a word in protest. Later, she asked me if I was interested in drawing a six-foot-tall rendition of the monster for her because she was getting ready to do an interview with a reporter in the next day or so. I got busy and drew a large-scale rendition of the monster right on her living room floor while she watched.

At the time I became very interested in her project, so I also wrote a song about the Lake Worth Monster, recorded it, and gave a copy to Sallie Ann. She played the song during her interview with the news reporter, and it was played during the interview when it aired on television.

While doing all this for Sallie Ann, she told me she was writing other books, mainly romance novels. Since I never liked romance novels, I did not pay much attention to that conversation, and mainly because she had me so fired up with her Lake Worth Monster project.

During the next few weeks, following all the excitement that had occurred at the lake, things cooled down a little, but it wasn’t the end to the sightings. I’ll bet I drove hundreds of miles on every little road and path around that lake, every chance I got, hoping to get a glimpse of that elusive monster. It finally paid off. It was late in the evening, around 1:00 a.m., and I was ready to call the trip a bust when I sighted something off to my left. Whatever it was jumped the fence and stood next to it.

There were lots of deer around, and that was the first thing that came to my mind. But this was different. I grabbed my camera and took aim at the thing. The camera was one of those instant flash photo cameras, so I only got one good shot before the thing took off. Now I can’t say for sure that it was the Lake Worth Monster or if it was someone dressed up like it, but I am sure I saw something. I was very excited about this because now, against all odds, I had a photo of what I saw. (I took several photos, but only one of them came out. The others were a blur.)

I called Sallie Ann from a service station and told her I had a picture of the thing, and she made me come right over to show her. The next day, an investigative reporter from the *National Enquirer* called me and wanted to see the photo and hear what I had to say about the incident. Two days later we met, and he followed me to where I had the sighting. He was a skinny man with glasses who asked all kinds of questions. He had a fancy camera and took photos of everything he could point his camera at. He even jumped the fence and took photos of the ground and trees. When he was finished, he thanked me and told me to keep an eye out for the *National Enquirer* to see if they would end up printing the story. I did that and two months later, the *Enquirer* had an article with the photo I took and a photo of me pointing to where the thing had jumped over the fence.^[xi]

Moving forward, there were fewer sightings. Sallie Ann's book had been sent to the publisher before I had my sighting, so I didn't make it in her book, but it would have been nice if I had. When she received her books, she called me over to give me a signed copy. She had just opened one of the boxes and handed me a copy to look at. After skimming through the book, I handed it back to her and she grabbed a pen and signed it for me. (It was the very first copy of the book, and she gave that copy to me!) She also thanked me for all the help I had given her. Inside the cover she wrote:

"To Bobby: The Creator of The Lake Worth Monster (well, picture-wise anyway). Thanks a million, Bobby. - Sallie Ann"

Man, I was bursting with pride. She gave me a hug and smiled. I still have my copy, although it is a little worse for wear due to all the reading and handling my family has done with it. I will never part with it. It's part of the history now.

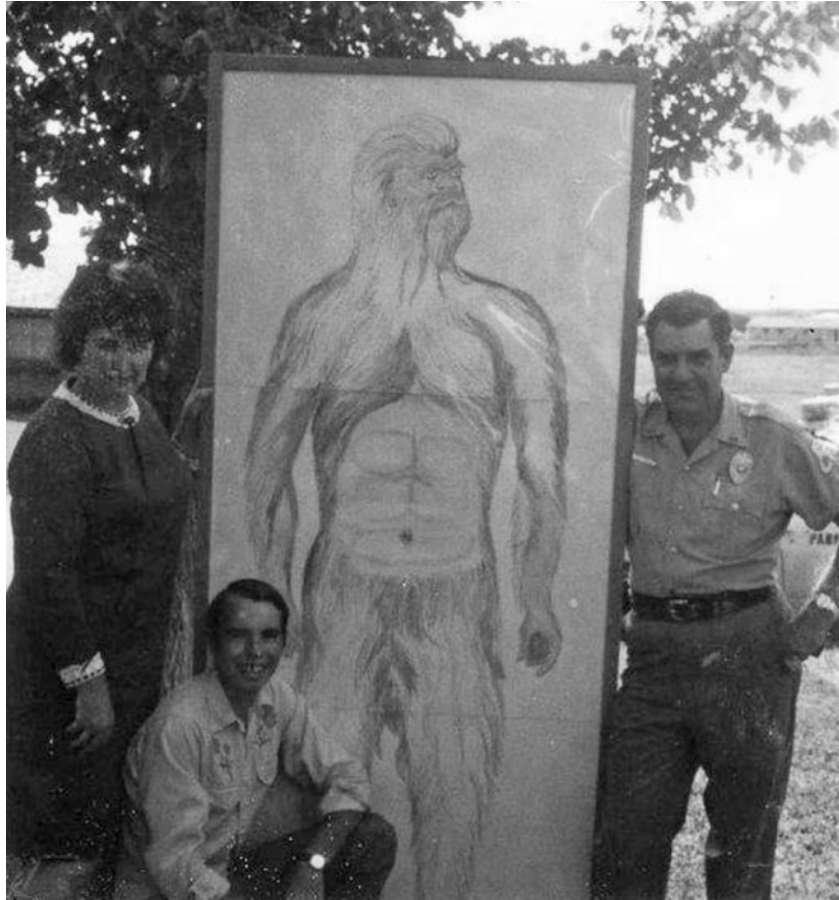
I stayed in touch with her for several years, although in 1970 I got married and joined the army, then moved away. After twenty-plus years in the army, I am now retired and enjoying my retirement.

I was saddened to hear of Sallie Ann's passing [in 2009], and I am angry at myself for not staying in touch with her through all those years. But I know that every time she looked at the cover of her book, she would remember me as the skinny, red-headed boy who drew it.

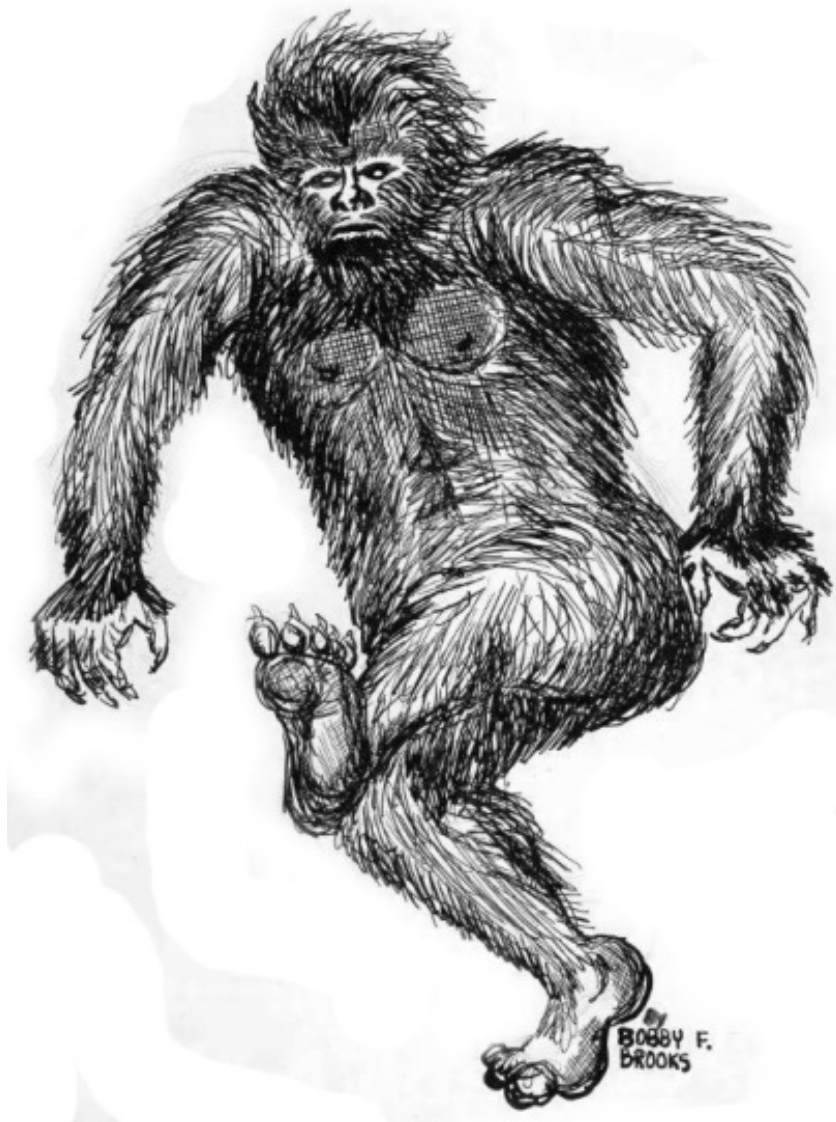
I almost kicked the bucket in April of 2013 from a heart attack. (I thought I just had a bad case of acid indigestion, but the docs said different.) I had a three-artery bypass or a CABGE as they call it, and later a stent, and then finally, they implanted a defibrillator in my chest to keep the ticker beating on a regular basis. It's working just fine, and the battery in the thing lasts for twelve to thirteen years. Anyway, I'm almost as good as new for a sixty-eight-year-old codger.

When I retired in 1990, I needed something else to do to keep me busy, so I became a self-taught graphic artist. Most of the art I do consists of patriotic themes like flags, eagles, and such. I also picked up the hobby of chainsaw carving. Mostly eagles, bears, and wolves, but almost anything that comes to mind. I do most of the artwork in my little office at home; the chainsaw and carpentry work in my little carpentry shop. I do keep very busy.

— Bobby Brooks



*Sallie Ann Clarke, a park ranger, and Bobby Brooks next to
his full-size Lake Worth Monster illustration in 1969
(courtesy of Bobby Brooks)*



*Monster sketch by Bobby Brooks
(courtesy of Bobby Brooks)*

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<https://www.fwnaturecenter.org/>

NOTES & BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [i] Jim Marrs would go on to write several *New York Times* bestsellers on the subject of conspiracies.
- [ii] You can view the 1969 news feature on YouTube under the title: “WFAA Investigation into the Lake Worth Monster.”
- [iii] To the best of my knowledge, only 1,000 copies of the book were printed.
- [iv] Cryptid is a term derived from the study of cryptozoology to identify animals or creatures that are said to exist but that have no scientific proof. Bigfoot is the most famous example of a cryptid.
- [v] For example, a Polaroid Automatic 350 instant camera, made from 1969 to 1971.
- [vi] Plaster gave the original photo to Sallie Ann Clarke and, as far as I know, it is still in the possession of her family. You can do a Google search on the Lake Worth Monster to view the photo. I do not have permission to reprint it in my book.
- [vii] Brooks said he bought the issue of the *National Enquirer* when it was released; however, he has since lost it. I have only been able to track down a cropped image of the article. We don’t know the exact date of the issue, so it’s been difficult to find an original copy.
- [viii] There is a lesson here, kids. If you drink alcohol, you may miss the opportunity to see something incredible!
- [ix] Details regarding this “boy” and the photos are unclear since Clarke mentioned it without elaborating further. She might have been referring to Bobby Brooks, who did take some photos, although it’s odd she wouldn’t mention him by name since they had become friends.
- [x] *Wild man* is a term used in the 1800s and early 1900s to describe mysterious, hair-covered bipedal entities that we would call “Bigfoot” today.
- [xi] Brooks remembers purchasing a copy of the *National Enquirer* with the article, but no longer has it in his possession. I’ve never been able to track down this particular issue, so I haven’t been able to view it myself. – Lyle
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- [1] Marrs, Jim. “Fishy Man-Goat Terrifies Couples Parked at Lake Worth.” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 10 July 1969.
- [2] WBAP-TV (Television station: Fort Worth, Texas). [News Script: Monster], July 10, 1969, NBC 5/KXAS News Scripts (AR0787), *The Portal to Texas History*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

- [3] Marrs, Jim. "Fishy Man-Goat Terrifies Couples Parked at Lake Worth." *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 10 July 1969.
- [4] WBAP-TV (Television station: Fort Worth, Texas). [News Script: Monster], July 11, 1969, NBC 5/KXAS News Scripts (AR0787), *The Portal to Texas History*, University of North Texas Special Collections.
- [5] Marrs, Jim. "Police, Residents Observe but Can't Identify 'Monster.'" *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 11 July 1969.
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